

# The American Twins of the Revolution



Lucy · Fitch · Perkins





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Perkins, Lucy Fitch, 1865-  
1937.

The American twins of the  
revolution

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By Lucy Fitch Perkins

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THE AMERICAN TWINS OF THE REVOLUTION. Illustrated.

THE AMERICAN TWINS OF 1812. Illustrated.

THE COLONIAL TWINS OF VIRGINIA. Illustrated.

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# THE AMERICAN TWINSON OF THE REVOLUTION

By Lucy Fitch Perkins

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

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1926

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The Riverside Press  
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TO  
SALLY'S GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTER  
GRACE W. BILL  
THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED





## PREFACE

*Though this is a true story of Revolutionary days, it has never before been published. It was told to me by Sally's great-granddaughter, who heard it when she was a little girl from the lips of Sally's own daughter, who got it from Sally herself.*

*The silver that was carried away on that sad and dangerous journey was the only thing saved from the old home of General Priestly, and it is still a treasured heirloom in the family of his descendants. The money to pay the troops was received by Mrs. Priestly, and she did guard it and get it safely to General Washington. She did conceal it in her bed, and she did push over the ladder with the man on it when he tried to enter the house to steal it. She did go in her best gown to meet General Howe and General Knyphausen; she was offered the shameful bribe, and when she scorned to consider it, she was ordered to leave the house, "taking nothing with her," and her house was then burned to the ground, just as the story says. She did escape with her children and join her husband, and Gen-*

eral Washington did give them a house of his own on the Rappahannock, where they lived until the war was over and General Priestly was at home again with his family.

All these hardships, and many, many more, were endured by our brave forefathers to give us the privileges that we now enjoy. Shall we not remember and be grateful?

Lucy Fitch Perkins



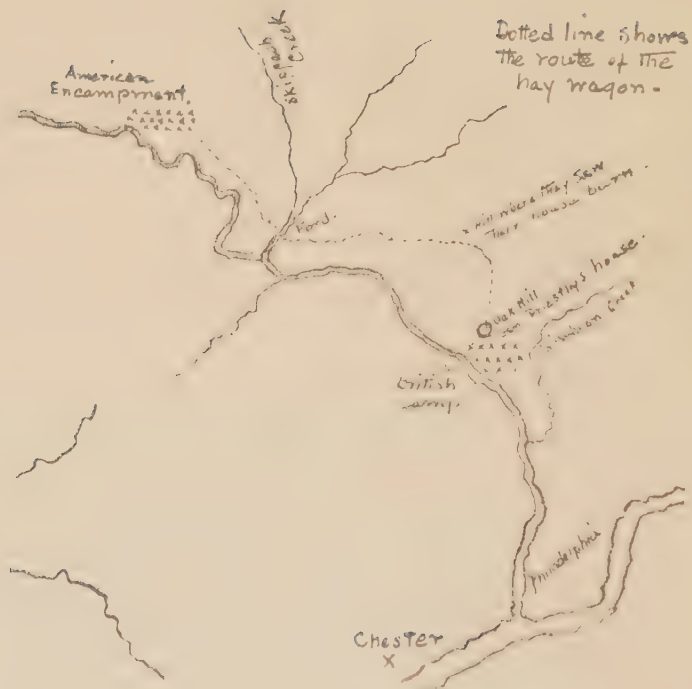
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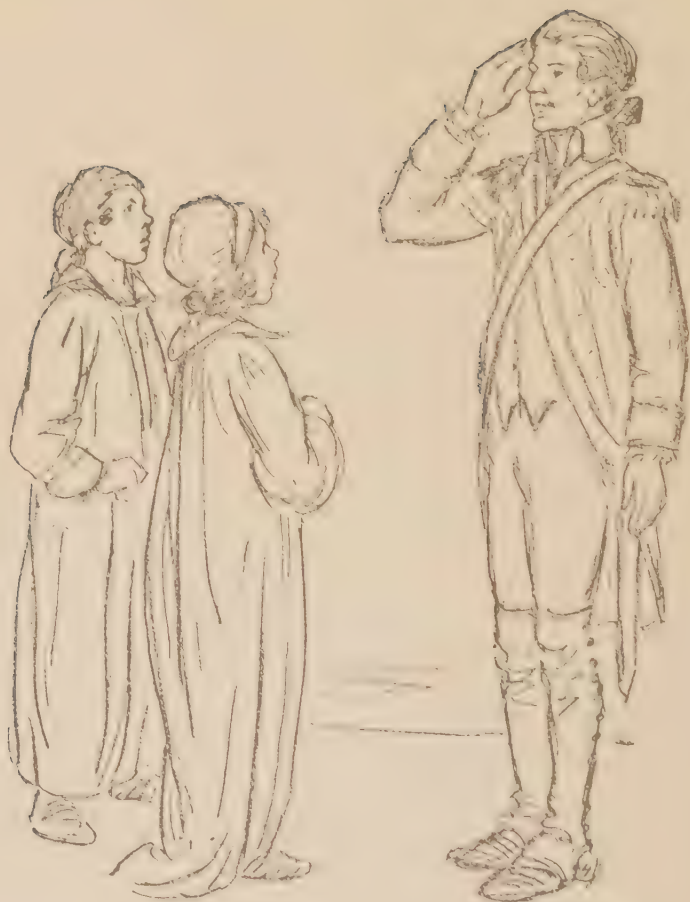




I  
A SEPTEMBER NIGHT IN THE  
YEAR 1777

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# I

## A SEPTEMBER NIGHT IN THE YEAR 1777

SALLY PRIESTLY woke suddenly out of a sound sleep and sat bolt upright in her little spool-spindled bed. She did not know what had wakened her; she only knew that her heart was beating like a hammer, and that she was trembling with fright. She smothered the sound of her gasping breaths in the gay patchwork quilt which covered her bed, and gazed fearfully about the room.

She could see everything in it quite plainly, for the bright moonlight streamed through the little window-panes, leaving a checkered pattern on the floor and bathing the familiar objects in a pale and ghostly light. It touched the brass andirons in the fireplace, and made them gleam faintly against the blackened bricks of the chim-

ney. The silver candlesticks on her bureau, standing like soldiers on guard before the little swinging mirror, caught a ray from its reflected light and winked it cheerfully back at her. Before the hearth the braided rug lay in its accustomed spot, and the Windsor chairs stood in a prim row against the wall.

The cool September breeze blowing in at the open window lifted the chintz curtains, but nothing else stirred in the room, and though Sally strained her ears to listen, there was no sound but the solemn ticking of the tall clock on the stair landing, and the far-away sound of a dog barking at the moon.

"What a silly I am!" she said at last to herself, giving her pillow a thump. "Everything is as quiet as a church. I must have had a bad dream."

She snuggled down under the gay coverlet again, shut her eyes tight, and was just beginning to feel a little drowsy when another sound caught her quick ear. It was the beat of horses' hoofs on the road. Old



Sailor, the yard dog, heard it and, springing from his hard bed on the doorstep, dashed down the driveway, barking like mad.

"Whatever can be the matter with old Sailor?" said Sally to herself, sitting upright again.

The dog soon stopped barking; but strange, stealthy noises now began all about the house. The stairs creaked; she heard soft footfalls, and a door close downstairs. Then to her amazement came the rumble of a low voice from below.

"That's a man talking," she said to herself, feeling the hair lift on the back of her neck. "It can't be father, for he's far away fighting with General Washington, and won't be home until the war's over; and it can't be Uncle Jude; it's a different rumble from his; and nobody else has any business in this house."

She waited a few moments, not daring to scream, and hoping that her mother would come. At last she could stand it no longer.

"I shall die of fright if I just stay here and listen," she said to herself; and, throwing back the covers, she slid quietly to the floor. She tiptoed across the room and cautiously stuck her curly brown head out of the window, and as quickly drew it back again. There, in the shadow of the stable, she saw a man holding the bridle-reins of two horses standing saddled beside him. Though Sally was frightened, she kept her head and did not scream. She stood still for a moment thinking, then crept as silently as a kitten across the floor and through the door into the room of her twin brother Roger.

"Roger, wake up!" she murmured in his ear, giving him a gentle poke in the ribs. Roger grunted, turned over, and instantly fell asleep again.

"Roger Priestly, *wake up!* do!" she implored, shaking him. "There's a strange man downstairs. Don't you hear him talking?"

Roger sat up blinking. "Oh, sis, you're

always getting scared in the night," he grumbled, but Sally clapped her hand over his mouth.

"Listen," she whispered.

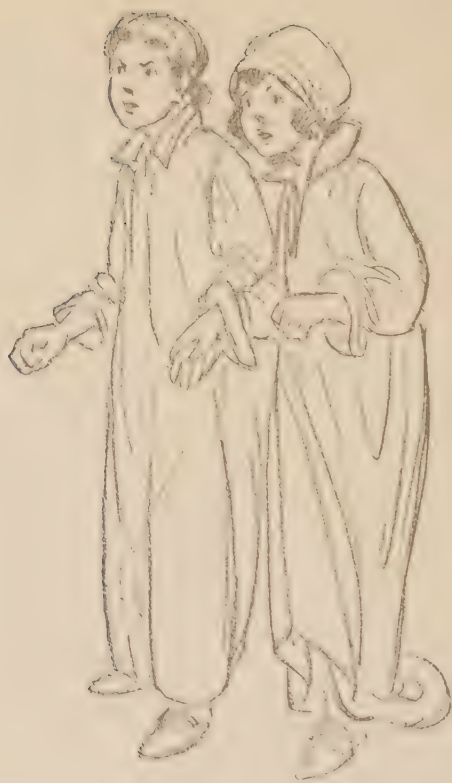
Roger listened; then, thoroughly awake at last, he scrambled out of bed and followed her into her room.

"Look," murmured Sally, pointing out of the window. There stood the man, still holding the horses. He seemed to be watching the house.

"We must wake Mother," said Roger.

They stepped quickly back out of the moonlight lest the man should see them, and, creeping softly to the door, opened it a crack and peered out. Everything in the wide hall was just as usual. The moonlight lay in square patches on the floor, and the great clock ticked solemnly as always on the landing.

Leaving their own door wide open, they scuttled across the hall, and, finding the one leading into their mother's room ajar, they slipped inside. There was no moonlight



in this room, and with fast beating hearts they groped their way in the dark toward her bed. They had almost reached it when Roger stumbled over a footstool and plunged headlong into the pillows, pulling Sally after him.

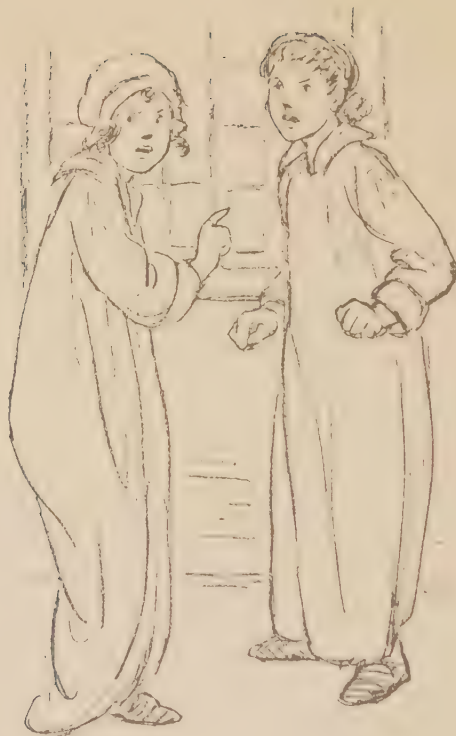


"Mother, — Mother," they gasped, but there was no answer. Her bed was empty! For an instant they could not believe she was not there. They felt over the mattress with their hands, whispering her name. They even searched about on the floor. Then, more frightened than ever, they made their way back to the door and stood still again to listen. Below the strange voice still rumbled on.

"He doesn't seem to mind whether people hear him or not," said Roger, under his breath. "He is talking to some one, so there must be two of them down there, anyway. I wonder if they heard me fall over that plaguey footstool!"

"Maybe they're Redcoats," shuddered Sally. "Maybe they've got Mother down there! Uncle Jude said he heard the British were coming this way. Oh, what shall we do?"

"Listen," whispered Roger. "We've got to find Mother, and there's nobody to help us. Uncle Jude and Aunt Hitty are the only



servants in the house, and they wouldn't wake up if it fell about their ears."

"Can't we get any of the other servants?" asked Sally.

"Of course not," said Roger. "We'd have to go right by the man with the horses to get to the quarters. We've just

got to find Mother, and we've got to do it alone."

"I'm scared to do it," said Sally.

"I'm more scared not to," answered her brother. "Come along."

He stepped boldly out into the moonlit hall, and, going to the bannister-rail, leaned over and looked down at the floor below. "All clear," he whispered, and hand in hand the two children began to descend the stairs.

From step to creaking step they went, pausing on each one to listen, and at last they stood trembling in the lower hall. Beneath the dining-room door there was a wide crack of light. The steady murmur of the low voice continued, and Roger, creeping softly to the door, slipped to his knees and, laying his head sidewise on the floor, tried to peep through the shining crack, but his nose got in the way and he bumped it against the door instead. To his horror the door, being loose, rattled a little.

Instantly the talking ceased and all was still. Then the voice began again.

"Did I hear a noise?" it said. There was no reply, and after a moment's pause the man said, "We can't be too careful. There are spies everywhere!" He lowered his voice almost to a whisper, and the children, though they listened breathlessly could catch only part of what he said.

"He's moving the troops farther up the river," were the next words they heard. "Since the defeat at the Brandywine the army has been discouraged. They tried to stop the British advances, but a drenching rain soaked all the ammunition and stopped the fight before it began. It means everything to the cause to get this money. It should get here to-morrow, and must be sent on with all possible speed. Howe is marching toward Philadelphia. General Washington is not in a position to defend it, and this whole region will probably fall into Howe's hands."

At this terrifying news Sally could not

help a little soundless sob. "They *are* Red-coats," she said to herself, clenching her fists in the dark.

The next few words were lost in a low murmur but soon the voice became audible again.

"I grieve to put this danger upon you," it said, "but there seems no other way. The troops must have money, and hard money too. They have lost faith in paper promises."

Just at this point Roger accidentally bumped into the door a second time.

"Who's there?" cried the voice, and before the children could make a move to escape there was a scraping of chair-legs on the floor and the sound of quick steps crossing the room. Frantic with terror, Sally threw herself on the floor beside her brother with her arms around his neck. The door was instantly flung wide open, and two long legs towered before them. From across the room the children heard their mother's astonished voice cry: "Roger!

Sally! What on earth are you doing here?" and at the same moment they felt themselves gathered in their own father's arms and folded in his embrace!

The shock of such happiness when they had expected something so different was too much for Sally. She hid her face in her father's neck and sobbed, while Roger, manfully struggling with a large lump in his throat, clasped the sleeve of his uniform. For a few moments everything was forgotten but the joy of being together again after many months of anxious separation.

"Oh, Father, was it truly *you* all the time? It didn't sound like your voice at all," said Roger at last.

"We thought you were Redcoats," added Sally, lifting her head from her father's collar.

"But what were you doing on your knees in the hall?" asked their mother again, as her husband led the way back into the dining-room, and sat down in a chair before the fire with Roger on one side of him and Sally on the other.



"We were listening," said Roger. "We woke up and heard talking and saw a man outside with some horses, so we went to tell you. You weren't in your bed, so we came to find you."

"We thought the Redcoats were in the house and had got you," added Sally. She stoppéd to kiss her mother's hand. "We were so frightened."

"Never mind about that now," said their father. "You were outside the door listening; that's the main point. My time is very short and I have much to say. Tell me, Roger, did you hear all I was telling your mother?"

"Only a little of it, sir," answered Roger, "about money, and that General Howe was coming."

General Priestly looked at his wife, and his brow was furrowed with anxiety.

"Scarcely a secret to entrust to children! I would not have had this happen for anything you could name!" he said.

His wife thought a moment, then she

spoke. "It should not have happened, truly," she said, "but since it has, we must make the best of it. They were surely not to blame, and showed both courage and discretion in trying to find me in the face of what they believed to be danger. I think you may trust them."

"There is nothing else we can do," General Priestly agreed, drawing the children to his side. "Listen," he said to them, "and remember well what I am about to say to you. There has been a battle a little south of here, on the banks of the Brandywine. Our army was defeated and General Lafayette was wounded. We are taking a position now farther up the river, and General Washington sent me to arrange with your mother to receive money which is coming from Philadelphia to pay the troops and to send it on to him as soon as she can find a trustworthy messenger. It is a dangerous mission, for the country is full of spies, and if the British think there is money going to our army they will move heaven

and earth to get it. Half the people want the British to win this war, anyway. Things have not been going well with our army. It is a time of danger and discouragement, and those are the very times when courage and faith are most needed. Your mother has both. There is no one else we dare trust. She is going to stay here, guard that money, and find a way to get it to General Washington. Will you help her?"

"We will! We will!" said the children.

"Remember," said their father, "you must not betray this secret to a living soul. You must not let any one know that I have been here. You must do exactly what your mother tells you, and you must not flinch in the face of danger — if danger should arise."

He put his hands on their shoulders and looked deeply into their clear blue eyes.

"We promise," said the children, looking bravely back at him.

General Priestly rose to his feet. "Two more soldiers in the service of our country," he said, and, lifting his hand, he

gravely saluted his children. "I haven't another moment to linger," he said. "I trust you. May God bless and protect you!"

He gathered his wife and children to his arms in one wide embrace, kissed their upturned faces, held them for a moment to his heart, then strode out of the room and the house.

From the window they watched him mount one of the two horses waiting in the shadow of the stable. The soldier who had been standing guard mounted the other, and away the two men galloped in the moonlight.

The mother and children watched until they were hidden from sight, and listened until they could no longer hear the beat of the horses' feet, then slowly and sadly they mounted the wide stairs to their rooms. The tall clock on the landing struck four as their mother tucked Sally and Roger once more in their beds, kissed them good-night, then went to her own room to wait for the morning.

## II

### THE NEXT DAY





## II

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WHEN Sally woke next morning, the sun was shining brightly in her room, and Aunt Hitty, a large negro woman in a red turban, was standing beside her bed with a tray in her hands.

"Yo' ma say yo' gwine ter take yo' brekfus in yo' room dis mawnin'," she said. "What's de mattah wid yo', honey? Yo' mostly is mo' sassy dan a jay bird in de mawnin', an' heah it is gwine on nine o'clock! Yo' ma's done had her ration dis long time, and heah yo' is, sleepin' like you nevah gwine ter wake up. Is yo' got any symptoms?"

She set down the tray and looked anxiously at Sally, then went to bring her a basin of water and a towel.

"No, Aunt Hitty, I'm all right," said

Sally, sitting up and rubbing her eyes sleepily, "but last night —"

She was just about to say "last night Father came home" when she suddenly remembered her promise! She clapped her hands over her mouth lest the secret should escape. Aunt Hitty saw her do it.

"Is yo' got a toothache, honey?" she asked, putting a basin down before her on the bed.

"No, there's not a thing the matter with me, Aunt Hitty, except I'm hungry," said Sally.

"I suttinly did observe yo' clap yo' hand over yo' mouth like you killin' a skeeter," declared Aunt Hitty. "Hit peared like yo' must be struck with a mis'ry in yo' tooth. Dese yer teeth," she went on, handing her the towel, "dey comes hard and dey goes hard. I had a toothache myse'f las' week, an' I —"

Aunt Hitty was given to long speeches about her ailments, and Sally interrupted her.

"Isn't Roger going to have breakfast too?" she asked. "There's enough for both of us, and his napkin's here."

"Lawd bless yo', chile, he sholy is!" cried Aunt Hitty. "I plumb disremembered."

She hurried across the room to Roger's door, the floor boards creaking beneath her heavy tread.

"Yo' come right in yo' sister's room and eat yo' brekfus," she called through the doorway, "and min' yo' don't fergit to wash yo'se'f. Make haste, now, befo' dem muffins gits cold."

At the word "muffins" they heard Roger's feet strike the floor with a thud. Roger was very fond of muffins, and in spite of Aunt Hitty's reminder he wasted little time on his toilet. There was a splash in the basin, a swipe with the towel, and into the room he bounced and landed with a flying leap on the foot of Sally's bed. Sally saw him coming and saved a flood by lifting the basin in her hands.

"Roger Priestly," she snapped, "look

where you're going. You act like a great puppy."

"Bow wow," answered the unrepentant Roger. "Please, Aunt Hitty, give me some of those muffins."

He sat up on his knees and begged like a dog. Aunt Hitty laughed in spite of herself. She took away the basin and, setting the tray between them on the bed, disappeared through the door to open Roger's bed and tidy up his room.

When they were alone, Sally whispered across the tray: "Oh, Roger, I almost spoke about Father to Aunt Hitty! It almost popped right out of my mouth before I was wide awake!"

"That's what comes of telling things to women," said Roger loftily. "They can't keep a secret to save their lives!"

"Well, I *didn't* tell it, did I?" said Sally.

"Not that time, but I bet you will," said Roger, cramming half a muffin into his mouth at once.

"I bet I won't," cried Sally indignantly.

"I bet you will," mumbled Roger through the muffin.

"I will *not*," shouted Sally. She bounced indignantly in the bed and nearly upset the tray.

"There you go!" cried Roger, seizing it with both hands. "My, what a little spit-fire you are, Sally!"

"What all's de mattah with you chillun dis mawnin'?" demanded Aunt Hitty appearing in the doorway. "'Pears like yo' got out'n yo' beds wrong foot fust. Yo' eat yo' brekfus peaceable now, and git done with it. I got 'nuff to do without waitin' on a passel of qua'lsome chillun." She shook her red-turbaned head at them reproachfully. "I done raise yo' up ever since yo' was two little red squallin' no-'count babies," she said severely, "and I ain't nevah gwine to do it no mo', lessen you stop dis bickerin'. Heah you sit lookin' at one another like two young fryin' roosters spilin' fer a fight. Git right up now and git yo' clo's on."



She lifted the tray, set it on top of her turban, and marched majestically out of the room and down stairs.

When she had gone, Roger and Sally looked at each other sheepishly. Aunt Hitty's red turban had umpired many a lit-

tle spat between the two, for like her husband, Jude, she had been a slave in General Priestly's family since long before the children were born, and they had grown up under her care.

"I'll beat you dressing," said Roger at last, leaping to the floor and running to his room.

"No, you won't," cried Sally, scrambling out of bed, and after that not a word was heard from either of them until at the same moment they both shouted, "Ready!" and Roger appeared in the doorway of his sister's room.

"Anyway," said Roger, "I'll beat you down," and, running to the stairs, he flung himself on the bannister-rail and slid to the hall below. Not to be outdone, Sally instantly followed him, and the tall clock on the landing was so offended by such unladylike behavior that it struck nine ahead of time, with great dignity. There was no one in the hall below when they reached it, which was lucky for them, for their mother



would have been as shocked at such wild behavior as the tall clock itself if she had been there to see.

They found her in the store-room. She was a pretty little mother, with brown hair, like Sally's own, tucked under a white cap. Her dress was brown too, with a white apron over it, and from her belt hung a jingling bunch of keys. She was talking to Uncle Jude, a white-haired old negro, as the children came in.

"Good morning, Mother," said Roger, making his best bow, and Sally spread her skirts and dropped a beautiful curtsy, for though they were sometimes rude to each other, they were always respectful to their mother.

"Good morning, my dears," said their mother; she gave them each a gentle but hurried kiss and went on talking to her servant. The children stopped to listen. "Where did you hear that report, Jude?" Mrs. Priestly asked.

"Major Buckley's Sam was down souf ob

de ribber yesterday, an' he met up wid a niggah he knows who is cookin' in Ginerel Washin'ton's army. He was scourin' roun' de kentry, tryin' to pick up chickens an' aigs an' such truck, an'-he war bound an' 'terminated to buy de cattle Sam war drivin', but Sam dassent give 'em up, fer ol' Májor he'd skin him alive if he ain't brung home dem beasts."

"Is that all you heard?" asked Mrs. Priestly.

"Yassum, yassum. I low dat's about the heft of hit," said Uncle Jude, "'ceptin' he tol' Sam dey was a scrimmage down by de Brandywine Crick, and Ginerel Washin'ton's army was comin' slow 'count ob de wounded, an' 'count dey ain't got no good shoes to march in. Dey ain't got no money neither — fer to buy food. He say dey mighty bad off."

"Then we must do what little we can to feed them," said Mrs. Priestly with decision. "There are some provisions here that can be spared, and there is some corn still

left in the cribs. If we can get it to them it will make quite a store of meal."

"Yassum, yassum, lessen dem Redcoats gits to it fust. Dey's scourin' the kentry, too, I reckon," said Uncle Jude, "an' dey has money ter buy hit when dey cain't git hit no other way."

"There isn't money enough in the whole British army to buy anything from me," said Mrs. Priestly, with flashing eyes. "We must work fast if they are coming this way. We will hide all the supplies we can get together in the barn, this very day, and you will have to sleep down there to-night to guard them."

Uncle Jude rolled the whites of his eyes imploringly at his mistress. "I reckon Hitty better come 'long wid me, den," he said. "Hitty, — she's mo' scarous dan a wile-cat when she gits her dander up! Ain't no Redcoats gwine to tamper with them supplies if Hitty and me is bof of us dere."

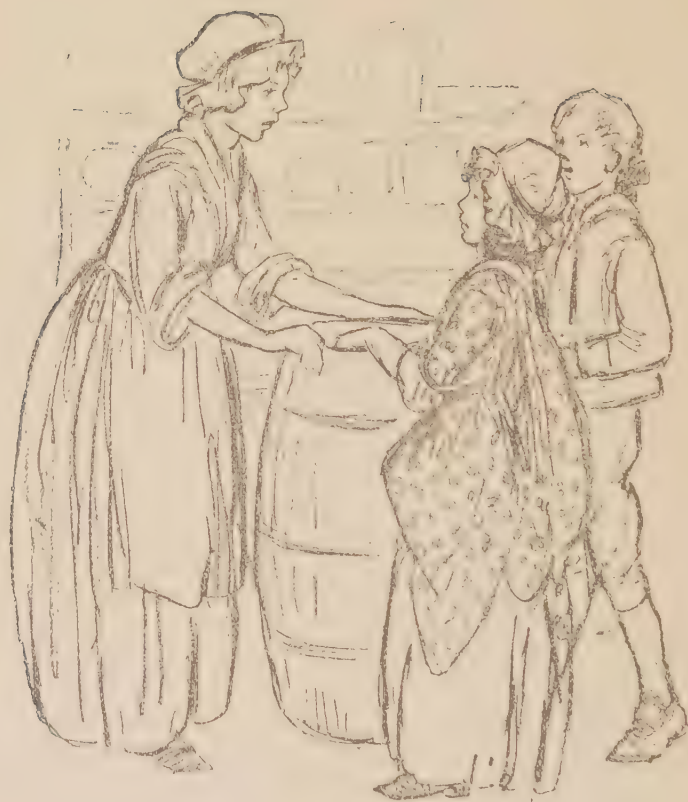
Mrs. Priestly smiled. "Yes," she said.

"Hitty may go with you, and whatever we do must be done at once, for if the armies are on the march, as Sam told you, they may be here any day. Go at once and harness Selim into the farm wagon and bring it to the back door. I'll have a load ready by the time you get back."

The bright morning, and the happiness of having seen their father so unexpectedly, had wiped away from the minds of the children the terrors of the night. It seemed to them quite natural that all sorrows should have happy endings; but as they heard these orders and saw their mother's pale and anxious face, the fears of the night returned upon them. Their father's solemn words came back to them, and their own equally solemn promise to stand by their mother in every way.

"May we help you, Mother?" asked Roger.

"Yes," she answered. "You, Roger, take this key and unlock the smoke-house door. Sally will bring you some big bas-



kets, and I want you to fill them with hams and sides of bacon, salt pork, and sausages. Do not say anything to the other servants if you see them. I do not want it to appear that anything unusual is going on."

She took a key from the bunch at her belt and handed it to Roger, and with another unlocked the door to an inner closet and began at once to strip it of its stores. While the children and Jude hastened away on these errands she searched the store-room for potatoes, early apples, sacks of corn-meal and flour, jugs of molasses, and other provisions which were kept there for winter use.

She had built up quite a rampart of the smaller parcels, when Aunt Hitty came to the store-room door and stood still, gazing in astonishment at her mistress's strange occupation.

"Fo' de Lawd's sake, Miss Liddy," she cried, "what all is you doin' wid dem ingregiums? Is you found cockroaches in dat 'ar 'partment? I done purify it pertick-

lér befo' all dem things was put away in dar!"

Mrs. Priestly scarcely glanced up from her labors. "Has Jude come yet?" she asked.

"He sholy is," said Aunt Hitty, "an' he sont me ter 'nounce dat he am waitin' at de kitchen do'."

"Tell him to come here, and come back yourself and help move these heavy barrels and sacks and load them into the wagon," commanded her mistress. "Somehow—I don't yet know how—we are going to get them to General Washington for our hungry soldiers."

Aunt Hitty bustled away on this errand, and in a short time returned with Uncle Jude, and mistress and servants worked together until the provisions were all safely stowed away on the floor of the wagon, together with the store of hams and bacon which the children had ready at the door of the smoke-house. The whole load was then covered with an old piece of canvas



to conceal it from curious or hostile eyes, and Uncle Jude went jogging along with it down the drive.

The farm buildings were half a mile or more from Oak Hill, crowned by General Priestly's fine old Dutch Colonial house, and the way to them led by a private road past the negro quarters, where house servants and field hands were sheltered in little cabins of their own. Passing through a grove of oaks and birches, it then joined the main road at the foot of the hill.

Mrs. Priestly and the two children followed the wagon at some little distance, making a detour of the quarters to avoid attracting attention to their errand. When they reached the barns, they found old Selim standing patiently in the open space beside the cow-stalls, while Uncle Jude, in the hayloft, was prospecting for a comfortable spot for Hitty and himself to sleep.

When he heard voices below, he came scrambling down the ladder and found Mrs. Priestly thoughtfully examining the hay-

wagon which stood in the open space beyond Selim.

"We will pile the stuff in this," she said, laying her hand on the wheel, "and then it will be ready to move at a moment's notice; but first I want the wagon lined with hay."

Roger and Sally instantly clambered up the ladder, and, gathering fragrant armfuls of dried clover, threw them over the edge of the loft. Uncle Jude picked the hay up on a fork and spread it carefully over the bottom and sides of the wagon, and, following his mistress's command, packed in the piles of provisions and scattered more hay over them, hiding the supplies completely.

When this was done, Mrs. Priestly and the children followed him to the corn-bin. There was quite a store of golden-yellow ears still left there from the last year's harvest.

"Gather all this into bags," said Mrs. Priestly to Jude, "and load it into the wagon with the rest of the stuff and cover every-



thing with hay. The new corn crop will be in in another month or so, if it is spared to us, and if not, this would make little difference. Be sure everything is well hidden."

"Yassum, yassum, Miss Liddy," said Uncle Jude. "I reckon I bettah stay right

yer now wid de goods, fer if dem Redcoats once gits a smell ob dem hams dey won't nuffin hold 'em."

"Listen carefully, Jude," said Mrs. Priestly, "for I am depending on you and Hitty to remember what I tell you, and say nothing about it to the other servants."

"Yassum, yassum, Mis' Liddy," said Uncle Jude, swelling a little with importance, "I awaits yo' o'dahs, ma'am."

"This is my plan," went on his mistress. "I am determined to get all the provisions I can possibly spare to our army, because they are in desperate need of food. I do not know where they are, but both armies are on their way north. It is possible that our own men may pass through here. If they do, they will simply take the hay-wagon along with them, but if the British army comes, we shall have to get the supplies to General Priestly some other way. I want you and Hitty to be ready at a moment's notice to escape with the wagon if I should give the word. Have the horses ready with

their harnesses on, stay by the load, and keep a sharp watch of the road."

"Yassum, yassum, I sho' will," said Uncle Jude, "but Miss Liddy, ma'am, I axes you, what is *yo' gwine ter do* if dem Red-coats comes bilin' ovah dese yer parts? Is you gwine to light out yo'sef, or is you gwine to tarry?"

"I shall stay," said Mrs. Priestly firmly, "unless I am forced to leave. I cannot believe the British army will make war on a defenseless woman and her children; but, whatever happens, I must get this load of supplies to the General, and I rely on you to help me. I shall tell the same thing to Hitty."

With these words Mrs. Priestly left the barn, followed by the children, and hastened up the homeward path.



### III

## AN UNWELCOME GUEST





### III

## AN UNWELCOME GUEST

"Who's Aunt Hitty talking to?" demanded Roger as they came in sight of the back door.

His mother shaded her eyes with her hand and was surprised to see Aunt Hitty's red turban towering in the kitchen door, and before her on the step an old man leaning on a stick.

"It's no one I ever saw before," said Mrs. Priestly uneasily. "I wonder what he wants."

Sally looked at the man, then, creeping closer to her mother's side, took hold of her hand. Old Sailor, who had followed them to the barn, on the way back had lingered to pass a few uncomplimentary remarks to a squirrel in an oak tree; but at this moment he came dashing around the corner

of the stable. Seeing the stranger at the door, he made for him at once, barking furiously. Roger and Sally started on the run after him.

"Come here, Sailor! Hi, there! Down, sir, down!" shouted Sally, and Roger whistled as he ran, but old Sailor had a prejudice against shabby people as well as against squirrels; and the stranger was undeniably shabby.

One leg was bound up with rags, his coat was torn, and his gray beard fell like a thatch over his soiled waistcoat. His three-cornered hat hung limp and shapeless, and over his shoulder he carried a small bundle on a stick. Apparently it was old Sailor's firm intention to eat the stranger alive; but as the children came racing up the path, the old man dropped his bundle, and, lifting his stick with a surprisingly spry motion, stood waiting for the dog to come on.

Seeing the stick, old Sailor thought better of it, and backed off, still barking, though

from a respectful distance. When Mrs. Priestly reached the door, Roger had him safely collared; and the old man, having picked up his bundle, was standing as humbly as before.

"Dis yer gen'lman," said Aunt Hitty, "he just 'splanify dat he gwine down to Philadelphy, fer ter see his dawtah. She am livin' dar and she am sick. He done hurt his laig, and he axes, would I give him a snack, and leave him rest a spell in de kitchen. I war just fixin' fer to fry him a rasher of bacon, Miss Liddy, but now yo' is come, I axes yo', kin I do it?"

Mrs. Priestly glanced at him keenly, and the man responded with an appealing look. "You may come in," she said. "Roger, chain up the dog."

"Thank you, gracious lady," whined the old man, and, tottering feebly into the kitchen, he sat down on the settle beside the fire.

Aunt Hitty at once seized the bellows, blew the coals to a blaze, and, laying some

slices of bacon in a spider, placed it over the coals. The stranger sniffed appreciatively as the delicious smell of frying bacon filled the kitchen, his eyes meanwhile roving curiously about the room. In a few moments, a hearty meal of bacon, brown bread, and fried eggs was set before him. While he ate, Mrs. Priestly busied herself with some jars of jelly which Aunt Hitty had placed on the window-sill in the sun, at the same time keeping an eye on her strange guest.

Roger came back from tying up the dog, who still barked indignantly, no doubt because his efforts to guard the house had met with so little appreciation. Sally lingered at the door gazing with round eyes at the visitor, and here Roger joined her.

Not a word was spoken by any one except Aunt Hitty, who was always spilling words about, whether any one listened to her or not.

“How come yo’ done hurt yo’ laig?” she



inquired of the stranger. Then, as he made no reply, she cheerfully answered her own question. "Mos' likely yo' run into some-thin'! Hit must be monst'ous onsatisfyin' to be trompin' de big road on a sore laig. Is yo' come from de no'th or de souf?"

She paused a moment, and still getting no answer, went right on talking. "I had

a sore laig myse'f once. One of dese yer berrycussed veins. Hit had ter be swaged up and down with bandages clear from de foot to de knee, but hit war berry-pickin' time, an' I hatter hump myse'f pickin' goose-berries and makin' jam. — Law's a massy, what's dat rumpus at de front do'!"

She dropped the spider she was cleaning as there came a loud knock from the front of the house.

"Whar's dat no 'count yaller gal what should be tendin' dat ar door?" she grumbled as a second knock came.

"Eliza is busy in the attic," said Mrs. Priestly. "You may answer the door, Hitty."

"Yassum, — yassir, — I's comin'," cried Aunt Hitty, and, seizing a white apron, she hastened to obey the summons, tying the strings about her ample waist as she went.

Roger and Sally at once ran round the house to peep at the front door and see who was there, and Mrs. Priestly was left alone in the kitchen with the old man. Though

he had finished every crumb of his food, he made no move to go, but sat caressing his bandaged leg as though he felt unable to continue his journey.

In a moment Aunt Hitty's heavy tread shook the floor of the passage-way and her voice was heard proclaiming the result of her errand.

"Hit am Major Buckley hisself, Miss Liddy," she called. "He am settin' out in his kerridge with dem chillun, an' he done sont you a bag of buckwheat! Sam, he's bringin' hit 'roun' ter de kitchen do' dis berry minute."

Any one watching very closely might have thought that Mrs. Priestly gave a little start when she heard the word "buckwheat," and that she threw a quick, anxious look at the stranger, but his gaze was fixed on the door where Sam's ebony face had already appeared.

"Yo' bring dat bag right 'long in," cried Aunt Hitty to Sam. "Hit suttinly is monstrous perlite of Major Buckley to foteh hit.

fer us is sholy pow'ful fond ob buckwheat cakes. I reckon I'll be 'bleeged ter heat dat ar griddle and fry sassingers fo' brckfus' every day ob de worl' from dis time fo'th, even for ebber mo'."

"Hit ain't ground yit," said a man's voice, and Major Buckley's Sam came into the kitchen and swung the bag to the floor. "Dat suttinly am a pow'ful heavy sack of grain," said Sam, rubbing his shoulder, "'pears like hit am mo' heavier dan hit war yesterday."

"Where did it come from, Sam?" asked Mrs. Priestly.

"Ma'yland, ma'am," answered Sam. "I done brung hit up from de Major's fa'm down near de Brandywine."

"Please set it in the store-room," said Mrs. Priestly, and when this was done she locked the door, and, leaving Sam and Hitty and the stranger in the kitchen, went to the front door to speak to the Major. She found him still sitting in his carriage with Sally on one side and Roger on the



other, for the children loved this kindly neighbor.

Though he was a white-haired old man, he stepped briskly down from the carriage when he saw Mrs. Priestly, and, hat in hand, went up the steps to meet her. The children tumbled out after him.

"Won't you come in, Major?" asked Mrs. Priestly. "I want to thank you for bringing us the buckwheat."

"Not at all, not at all," said the Major. "Happy to be of service."

"I shall try to get it to the mill to-morrow," added Mrs. Priestly. "I suppose it should be ground as soon as possible?" She lifted her brows and glanced meaningly at the Major as she held the door invitingly open.

"The sooner the better, I should say," answered the Major, nodding his head. "No, no thank you, Lydia, I won't come in. Too near my dinner hour. Sam! Sam! Where is that black rascal?" The Major thumped vigorously with his cane on the

floor of the verandah as he shouted his servant's name.

"We'll get him for you," cried Roger, and he and Sally ran round the house at once, and found Sam standing on the kitchen steps listening to Aunt Hitty, who was giving a thrilling account of a recent attack of jaundice.

"Yo' all kin believe hit or not," Aunt Hitty was saying, "but my eyes, dey look for all de worl' jes like a pair of hard-biled eggs, dey war dat yaller —"

"Sam, the Major is calling you," cried Sally at this point in the narrative; and Sam bolted at once, leaving Aunt Hitty's symptoms trailing aimlessly off into space.

She seized upon Sally. "Heah, honey," she said, "yo' go bring Aunt Hitty some sweet apples from yonder tree, and I'll bake some fo' yo' supper." Sally was very fond of baked sweet apples, so she ran at once on this errand.

Roger, meanwhile, had pushed past Aunt Hitty into the kitchen, curious to see if the



stranger were still there, and was astonished to find the settle empty and to see him in the passage-way, by the store-room door. The old man stepped back into the room with surprising agility when he saw Roger.

"I was looking for the gracious lady to thank her for letting me rest my old bones in her kitchen," he said. "I must be on my way, and may God reward her kindness!"

He lifted his hand in a pious gesture of blessing, and hobbled out the door and down the drive. Roger watched him until he disappeared around the corner, and then joined Sally under the apple tree.

"I don't like the looks of that old beggar a bit," he said to her. "I'll bet he's a spy."

Sally dropped the apples she had gathered in her apron, and looked at her brother with frightened eyes.

"Oh, Roger, do you really think so? I was afraid of him all the time, but I didn't think he could be a spy — he's so old!"

"Listen," whispered Roger. "I don't

believe he is so old. Didn't you see how spry he was when he lifted his stick at Sailor? And he stepped out mighty lively just now when I found him in the passage-way by the store-room door. Besides, his eyes are bright, and he has strong-looking teeth."

"Oh, Roger!" shuddered Sally; then, seizing her brother's hand, she said, "Let's run after him and watch him out of sight."

Stopping only to unleash Sailor, the two children ran down the lane with the dog bounding after them, and, scrambling up a small hill, settled themselves behind a stone wall on the summit and surveyed the road in both directions.

"There he is — there he is!" cried Roger, pointing toward the north. "He's walking toward the farm barn as spry as you please. He's not so lame as he makes out."

"Oh, I hope Uncle Jude is still there!" breathed Sally, and as if in answer to her wish they saw his white woolly head in the open doorway.



The old man, seeing him too, suddenly resumed his limp, and, hobbling feebly forward toward the barn, stopped as if asking Jude a question. Even at a distance the children could see that the man lingered to peer into the shadowy recesses of the barn, and if Uncle Jude had not blocked his way it was evident that he would have gone inside. But Uncle Jude did block his way, and, getting him back to the road, pointed westward as though giving him directions.

"Oh, the old villain!" exclaimed Roger, as the man made a gesture of farewell and stepped off feebly as though to follow the path indicated. "He isn't going to Philadelphia at all, as he told us he was! He's going straight away from it! If he isn't a spy for the British, I'm a Dutchman!"

"Sh, sh!" warned Sally. "Speak lower. You know Father said they were everywhere!" She glanced fearfully over her shoulder, but they were on a sunny hilltop with no hiding-place near.

"I'll wager anything they know there's money coming through here for our troops just as father said," Roger gasped. "They've certainly heard of it somehow, and they are after it."

For a moment the brother and sister gazed, terror-stricken, into each other's eyes. Then, calling Sailor, who was nosing about a woodchuck-hole and barking hysterically, they ran hand in hand toward home as fast as they could go. They found their mother in the dining-room alone

packing a quantity of spoons and her silver tea-service in an old bag.

"What are you packing those for?" asked Roger astonished.

"The soldiers need food more than we need silver," answered their mother. "I shall pack them in the wagon with the rest of the supplies, and if they can be turned into coin so much the better."

"Oh, Mother dear," cried Sally, bursting with their news, "you can't think what Roger and I just saw from the hill down by the road. We followed that old man, and he doesn't seem old or lame or anything, and he's going away from Philadelphia instead of to it, and we're just sure he's a spy!"

Her mother listened with tightened lips and flashing eyes.

"He has heard somehow about the money and thinks it is in that bag of buckwheat, no doubt," she said. "Very well. Let him think so! That's a long way from his getting it. And now not another word of this



to me, or even to each other! The servants must not suspect anything. They all know that the armies are near and that one or both may pass this way, but that's all they do know, and Uncle Jude and Aunt Hitty are the only ones who know even about the load of provisions. You must act just as if nothing had happened or was likely to happen. Do you understand?"

"But, Mother, when will the money get here?" whispered Sally.

Her mother's only reply was to lay her finger on her lips and go on with her packing.



IV  
A LOAD OF HAY



## IV

### A LOAD OF HAY

THE noon meal was quickly eaten with no one but Aunt Hitty in attendance; and the afternoon was spent by the children and their mother in getting the various packages safely stowed away in the hay-wagon without their frequent visits to the barn arousing suspicion in case any one should see them. Uncle Jude's dinner was carried down by Aunt Hitty, who took at the same time in her basket quilts for their bed in the hayloft, and, beneath them, quite out of sight, the bag containing the spoons and the silver service. Aunt Hitty was a staunch and fearless old soul, as honest as the day; and Mrs. Priestly knew that in her and Uncle Jude she had helpers who would be faithful to any trust.

Late in the afternoon, while Roger and

Sally kept a sharp lookout from the barn cupola, she stood beside the hay-wagon directing Aunt Hitty as she stowed away the final bundles and packed around them the hay which Uncle Jude threw down from the loft.

"If any of dem Britishers comes snoop-in' 'round dis yer wagon in de dark, dey gwine mistrus' de debble's atter 'em," declared Aunt Hitty, as she thrust the bag containing the silver down among the hams and sides of bacon, "fer I's gwine to heave de pitchfork at 'em ef I hears any circumlocatin' 'round de flo' ob dis yer barn! An' jes' gimme room to holler an' I kin screech mo' samer dan a wile-cat an' scare de gizzard right outen 'em! You heah me!"

She was about to give an exhibition of this accomplishment, but Mrs. Priestly checked her. "I know I can trust you, Hitty," she said, "but it is safer to keep as quiet as possible. Don't screech unless you have to."

"Yassum, Miss Liddy, I sho' will set a watch on my lips like the Scriptor say, and dey ain't no holler gwine to git by me, lessen I's bleegeed to," she said, and, sitting down on the tail of the wagon, she slid ponderously to the floor. "I isn't so lively as I war once," she sighed, "but I reckon if yo' can't depen' on yo' laigs to take yo'self away fum trouble, yo' jes' got ter make a tolerble scrumpshious 'sturbance whar de trouble is, and dat's what I's gwine to res' on."

She eyed the ladder to the loft with suspicion. "What gits me ain't dem Britishers," she said grimly, "but hit am how *is* I gwine to hist myse'f up dat ar ladder? I ain't one dem skinny angels like what Jacob drempt about, 'scendin' and descendin' dat ar ladder so s pry, clar to de Kingdom an' back."

"Oh, you can do it. *You'll have to*," said Mrs. Priestly firmly. "Toss the quilts up now to Jude, and he'll fix a comfortable place for you."



Under her direction more hay was thrown down until the wagon was covered with a fragrant mound of green, heaped high above the stakes which held it in place, and concealing every trace of the valuable load stored beneath it. Then she called to the children. They at once came scamb-



ling down the cobwebby stairs to the hay-loft, and then down the ladder to the floor of the barn.

Aunt Hitty looked at them with envy. "Reckon I bettah tarry a spell and try out dat ar ladder by myse'f," she said. "I aims ter fin' out befo' dark ef dem rungs is gwine ter ho' me up."

"That is a good plan," said her mistress, "for you must find your way to the loft in the dark to-night." And with these words she took her departure, followed by the children.

The sun was just slipping out of sight behind the western hills when they reached the house, and, going quietly upstairs to their rooms, they dressed themselves neatly in fresh clothes for the evening meal. And when half an hour later they sat, a lonely little group of three, around the table, with the candles shining on the damask cloth, and Eliza, the "yaller gal" of Aunt Hitty's scorn, slipping in and out from the kitchen to serve them, no one looking in upon the

quiet scene would have dreamed what anxious thoughts lay concealed beneath Mrs. Priestly's calm brow. Still less would he have guessed that the two children, so busy with their supper, carried with them a secret the British army would give much to know.

Supper over, the great bell was rung, and the servants came flocking from the quarters to the "big house," and gathered in the dining-room. Liza brought the Bible and the Prayerbook to Mrs. Priestly, who, following her regular custom, read aloud to her household a chapter from the Bible, then the ninety-first Psalm and the collect for aid against perils.

"Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen."

The sweet voice trembled a little over the words so suited to their need; but as her servants rose from their knees and, bid-

ding their mistress a respectful good night, passed out of the room and the house, not one of them guessed how real and how close were the dangers from which she had prayed to be delivered.

Aunt Hitty lingered behind the others, dreading her lonely walk to the barn, where Uncle Jude still kept guard; and Mrs. Priestly detained her still further, wishing to keep from those who lived in the quarters the knowledge that she and Jude were to spend the night in this unaccustomed place.

When the last servant had disappeared down the lane, and the sound of their talk and laughter no longer floated back to the big house, Mrs. Priestly said to her: "Before you go, Hitty, I want you to take his mattress and make up a bed for Roger on the floor in my room. I will take Sally into my bed to-night."

"Laws, honey," said Aunt Hitty, "is you all skeered to sleep alone in de big house? 'Pears like hit ain't right for Jude

and me to leave you and dem chillun with jus' de Lawd to look attar you."

Mrs. Priestly smiled, "I am not afraid," she said firmly, "and you are needed with Jude. When you go down to the barn, I want you to take that bag of buckwheat with you and put it on top of the load of hay."

"Is yo' gwine to mo'tify yo' stummick by givin' up all dat ar buckwheat to de army?" demanded Aunt Hitty.

"Not all of it," said Mrs. Priestly, "the bag would be too heavy for you to carry. While you are upstairs fixing the beds, I will take some out for our own use."

She turned to Sally and Roger. "Go up with Aunt Hitty," she said, "and get ready for bed. I will come up as soon as she starts for the barn."

The moon had risen and was shining brightly down from the blue-black sky when, a little later, Mrs. Priestly bade Aunt Hitty good night at the kitchen door, and held it open for her, as, balancing the heavy bag of buckwheat on her head, she went

down the steps and started on her lonely walk to join Uncle Jude at the farm barn. Old Sailor was at his post near the steps and, seeing his mistress, barked joyfully. Mrs. Priestly looked at him thoughtfully.

"Take the dog with you, Hitty," she said, "and when you reach the barn send him back to me, and I will let him sleep in the kitchen to-night. Good night."

"Good night, Miss Liddy, honey," said Aunt Hitty, and the next moment her dark silhouette and old Sailor's merged with the shadows of the trees in the lane.

Mrs. Priestly bolted the kitchen door, tried the windows to see that they were fast, made the circuit of the house to be sure every bolt and bar was in place, then waited until she heard the scratch of Sailor's paws on the door. Letting him in and leaving him on guard in the kitchen, she then went alone into the store-room. Here she put out her candle, and a moment later made her way slowly in the darkness through the silent house and up the stairs

to her room, carrying in her arms a heavy bag which in spite of her efforts would give forth a little jingling sound as she moved.

When she reached her room, she found the children already in bed, but wide awake. They greeted her with a little cry of joy.

"Oh, Mother," said Sally, "we thought you were *never* coming, —and—it's very dark!"

"Roger," said his mother, "come to my bed for a moment."

Roger was beside her in an instant as she deposited her heavy bundle on the counterpane. She put an arm about each of her children and drew their heads close to hers.

"I have the money here," she whispered. "I am going to hide it in my bed."

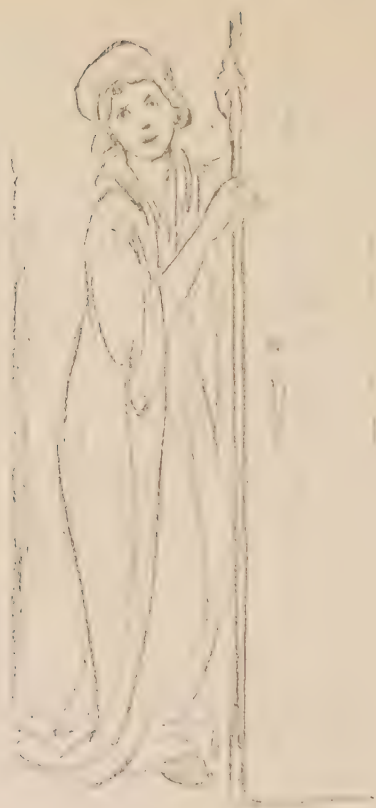
"Oh, Mother," breathed Sally, "it did come in the buckwheat, didn't it?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Priestly, "and I hope that spy — if he was a spy — will think it is still there, for Aunt Hitty has taken the bag with her to the barn, and is going to put it on the hay-wagon. They may pos-

sibly try to break into the house and get it, and if they do, there is no one to guard this treasure but ourselves. If I should wake you in the night, do not make a sound, but be ready to do exactly what I tell you. I pray God the need may not arise."

She buried the bag under the feather-bed, where, with her foot, she could feel the lump it made, and, undressing quickly in the dark, slipped into bed beside Sally. Roger sought his own cot on the floor; and soon everything in the big house was as still as if under a spell of enchantment. Feeling safe and comforted by their mother's presence, the two children soon fell into a healthy slumber, while she lay staring with sleepless eyes through her window over the moonlit valley of the Schuylkill.

At last, overcome by weariness and anxiety, Mrs. Priestly too fell into a troubled doze, from which she was soon awakened by a short, sharp bark from old Sailor. Whatever she may have suffered during the hours of suspense, when the moment



for action came all fear left her. She sat up in her bed and listened; old Sailor continued to growl, but no other sound disturbed the stillness of the autumn night.

Creeping quietly from her bed, she cautiously opened the door of her room and



looked out into the hall. Everything was still. Growing bolder, she then slipped out into the hall, and made a tour of the second floor, looking out of the windows in every direction from the house, to see if she could find any cause for Sailor's excitement. Not a sound, not a movement broke the silence.

It was a relief to her tense nerves when a distant rooster crowed, and the homely sound brought the welcome promise of a coming day.

Old Sailor ceased his uneasy prowling, and Mrs. Priestly heard the soft thud of his body as he lay down again on the kitchen floor. The great clock on the landing struck three; and, a little reassured, she returned to her room, and, creeping quietly into her bed, lay down once more beside Sally. Neither of the tired children had been wakened by the disturbance; and, sighing with relief at the thought that the long night was partly spent, their mother closed her eyes again, hoping to capture a

little more sleep to strengthen her for the duties and perils of another day.

She had been lying thus but a few moments, when she heard a new sound, as of some hard object striking a stone. Alert in an instant, she looked out of her window into the garden, which sloped from the house down the hill toward the river. The moon was still bright, though near its setting, and the long shadows moved slightly with the swaying of the tree branches in the night breeze.

Then suddenly two shadows detached themselves from the blackness of the hedge, and she saw two men coming toward the house carrying a ladder between them. Swiftly and silently they approached with their burden, and at this moment Sally suddenly woke and sat up too.

Her mother whispered in her ear, "Stay perfectly still where you are," and without another word slid to the floor, and, creeping to Roger's bed, woke him gently by placing her finger on his lips, and whispering in his ear.



“Wake up and come with me.”

He was out of bed in an instant and followed his mother as she crept on her hands and knees round the edge of the room, keeping close to the wall as she passed beneath the windows in order not to be seen if any one should look in. They had reached a position beneath an open window of the room, when they heard the scrape of the ladder against the house wall. They dared not

look out to see what was going on, because they would then be visible to the intruders, and a good target for their pistols, should they decide to use them. They could only guess from the further sounds they heard what was going on outside; but in a moment the two uprights of the ladder rose before their eyes, and, looking upward, they saw it settle gently into place against the outside wall, above the open window.

In the dim light Roger watched his mother's every move as a cat watches a mouse. He could only guess her purpose, for speech was impossible between them. Cautiously she knelt beneath the window with her head below the level of the sill, and her eyes fixed on the opening, and Roger faithfully followed her example; while Sally, alone in her bed, and frozen with terror, strained her eyes to pierce the black shadows of the room and see what they were doing.

They had not long to wait. In a moment and without a sound the head of a man ap-

peared before the window, the face exactly opposite the opening. On the instant Mrs. Priestly sprang like a jack-in-the-box directly toward the man, uttering at the same time a scream so blood-curdling and weird that it froze the very marrow in Sally's bones. The apparition of a white figure lunging at him so suddenly startled the man, and he swayed backward on the ladder.

"*Now!*" cried Mrs. Priestly, and, leaning from the window, she seized the rungs and pushed the ladder from her with all her strength. Instantly grasping her idea, Roger leaned from the window and pushed too with all his might. The ladder yielded, swayed, and swung away from the window, carrying the man down with it.

They heard a thud and a groan as man and ladder struck the stones of the terrace below the window; then all was still.

Old Sailor, who had remained quiet until now, hearing the crash, came bounding up stairs barking madly, and clawing at the

closed door. Mrs. Priestly rose to her feet, and, hiding behind the curtain on her side of the window, peeped through a crack to see what went on below. They could not see much without being seen themselves, but they heard a low moan from below, and knew that the man was too badly hurt to rise.

Roger left the window, and let old Sailor into the room. Then, arming himself with the brass-headed tongs and handing his mother the poker, he took up his station once more beside the window. That there was more than one man they well knew, but how many might be lurking below in the hedges or hidden behind trees they could only guess. At least they would not be taken by surprise, and neither would they yield the treasure without a struggle.

Quieting the dog as best he could, Roger led him to the bedside, where Sally lay shivering with her head under the blankets and her body protecting the precious gold.

"On guard," he said to Sailor, and, leav-

ing his sister and the dog to comfort each other, he rejoined his mother at the window. She clutched his hand tightly without a word, then closed and fastened the window, and once more slipped behind the folds of the curtain. Two men now sprang from the shelter of the hedge. Breathlessly mother and son watched them, clutching their poor weapons meanwhile, until they saw the men reach the spot where the injured man still lay. Their relief was great when they saw that instead of making another effort to enter the house, the men, using the ladder as a stretcher, lifted the groaning man upon it, and bore him quickly down the hill toward the river. As they went, the watchers at the window noted that a leg of one of the stretcher-bearers was bound up with rags.

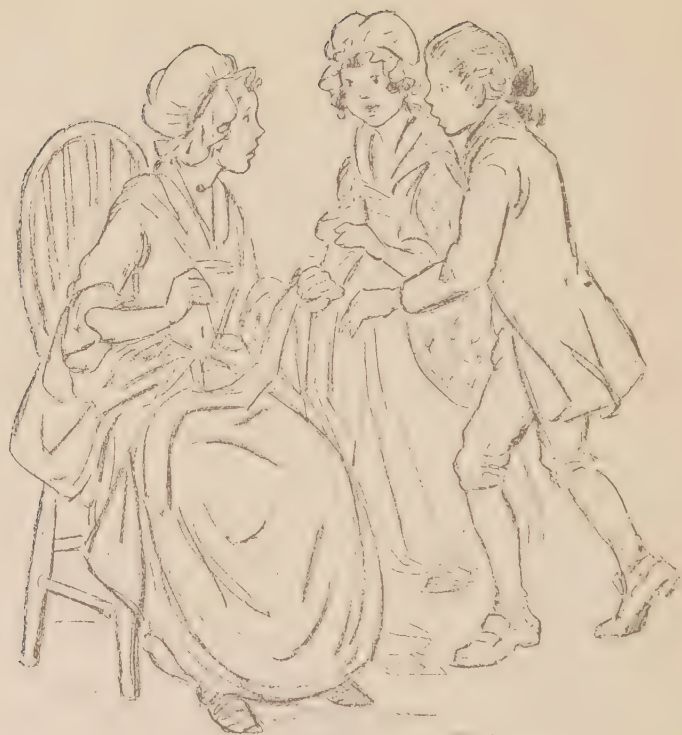
A little later, still watching, they saw in the waning moonlight a dark oblong shadow loose itself from the shore and float out on the silvery surface of the Schuylkill, then glide away down stream toward the

city of Philadelphia. They could hear for a little while the click of the boat's oarlocks, then all was still..

The sky reddened in the east, birds flitted about in the hedges, and a chorus of cocks welcomed the dawn, and still the faithful watchers kept guard over their treasure, fearing the men's return. At last, entirely spent, and a little reassured by the broad sunlight of the September morning, mother and children sank into a refreshing slumber, with Sailor lying on the floor by Roger's bed.



V  
THE REDCOATS



## V

### THE REDCOATS

THEY were aroused at last by Aunt Hitty's vigorous pounding on the kitchen door. She had come up to the big house after a comfortable night in the hay to get breakfast for the family. Old Sailor bounded down stairs to bark a friendly greeting, and Mrs. Priestly, slipping on a dressing-gown, started down stairs to let her in.

"Mind," she said to the children as she left the room, "not a word of what has happened to any one. Get up, wash, and dress yourselves neatly; and act as if you had had a good night's sleep. There is likely to be much in this day to test your courage."

Another rap resounded through the house, and, having given this warning, Mrs. Priestly hastened to open the kitchen

door. There on the threshold stood Aunt Hitty.

"What all is de mattah, Miss Liddy, honey?" she demanded, gazing in surprise at her mistress's dressing-gown and bare feet thrust into knitted slippers. She glanced at the sun. "Hit mus' be gwine on eight o'clock, I reckon. Dat ol' bahn, — hits so da'k yo' cain't scacely tell sun-up from de middle ob de night, so I jes ovah-slep' myse'f. I sho'ly thought dem chillun mus' be rarin' 'roun for dey brekfus befo' dis time."

"We overslept too," said Mrs. Priestly. "Did you hear any disturbance in the night?"

"Nuffin but Jude's snores," answered Aunt Hitty promptly. "Dat ol' man he suttinly can fetch a snore like de las' trump a-tootin'! 'Pears sometimes like the hebbens done roll up in a scroll, same as Scrip-ter says, when he fatches one ob dem deep ones. I reckon if any Redcoats come nosin' round in de night, dem vittles don't

need no other pertectin'. Des let Jude aim one ob dem snores right, and I lay hit would plumb scarify de whole British army! Leastwise nuthin' ain't happened yit."

Aunt Hitty was already in the kitchen, uncovering the coals and laying fresh wood on the fire as her tongue ran on. She did not even notice that her mistress had left the room and was on her way up stairs.

Half an hour later, when Roger, Sally, and their mother entered the dining-room, they found a hot breakfast awaiting them, with Liza standing behind her mistress's chair ready to serve. They did not linger over the meal, for Mrs. Priestly dared not leave unguarded the precious bundle in her bed upon the safety of which so much depended.

When she rose from the table, she said to Liza, "I will put my room in order myself this morning while you help Hitty in the kitchen," and, passing up the broad stairs, she disappeared in the hall above.

Roger and Sally, eager to shake off the terrors of the night by a breath of the fresh morning air, ran out of doors and round the house. Under the bedroom window on the terrace they found old Sailor sniffing at a little pool of darkened blood. Sally shuddered and called the dog away, while Roger scattered earth over the hideous reminder of the experience of the night, but, remembering their mother's solemn warning, neither one said a word about it to the other. Farther down the hill they came upon a broken place in the hedge where the ladder had been forced through; and there they saw heavy footprints among the flower-beds.

For some time they wandered about in the sunshine, uneasy, filled with excitement and a dread of what the day might have in store for them. They were standing under the sweet apple tree, when Roger suddenly seized his sister's arm, and, pointing toward the east, gasped, "Look, look, — they're coming!"



“Where? Where?” cried Sally. Then she too caught the flash of sunlight on the shining steel of bayonets in the far distance.

Without another word the two children ran into the house and up to their mother’s room as fast as they could go. They found her busily sewing on long strips of strong

linen cloth which she had torn from the sheet of her bed.

"Mother, look!" they cried, and, seizing her hands, they pulled her to the window. There, far down the road below, like a great serpent, a long file of men was marching up the valley of the Schuylkill, directly toward their home!

The mother and her children gazed upon the scene with hope and fear struggling in their hearts! Which army was it? Was it their own brave defenders, or was it the victorious army of their country's enemy? They were not long in doubt. Nearer and nearer came the long serpent with the sun shining on its steel scales! And now they could hear faintly the beat of distant drums, and see a glint of red in the marching columns.

"It's the *British* army!" cried Mrs. Priestly. She turned instantly from the window and took up her sewing. "Roger, tell Hitty that the soldiers are coming, and that she is to go at once to the barn and



tell Uncle Jude to hitch the horses into the hay-wagon. She is to stay there with him until they get word from me. Come back as soon as you have done this errand. Sally, get your thimble and help me. While you have been out, I have been working as fast as I could making bags to hold the money. We must carry it on our own bodies. I see no other way to protect it."

Sally ran for her thimble, and in a moment was seated on a footstool by her mother's side, running little seams across one of the linen strips, thus making narrow pockets in a long row in which the coins could be carried without danger of their rattling. When Roger came back, he too was given a strip with needle and thread, and the three worked against time.

The beat of the drums grew louder and louder, and the long serpent crawled nearer and nearer to their hill. And now the alarm had spread to the quarters, and the servants came flocking from fields and stables to the big house, as chickens run to the shel-



ter of their mother's wings when a hawk soars above.

Mrs. Priestly fastened her last thread, locked her door, and, going to the bed, drew out the bag of gold. She slit it open, and quickly emptied its contents into the long strips of linen pockets which they had prepared.

"Take off your clothes," she commanded. Sally and Roger instantly stripped to the

waist, and their mother's fingers flew as she wound one of the strips round and round each slender body and sewed the ends firmly together with strong thread. Then, loosening her own bodice, Mrs. Priestly bound the longest and heaviest one about her own waist and had Sally fasten it firmly as she had fastened theirs. When this task was finished and their clothes replaced, no one would have noticed any marked change in their appearance.

By this time the drum-beats were quite loud, and there were cries from the terrified servants below. Quick feet came running up the stairs, and as the last buttons were secured Mrs. Priestly opened the door of her room in answer to a frightened knock. She found Liza trembling in the hall, and confronted her calmly.

"Oh, Miss Liddy," cried Liza, seizing her mistress's skirt, "de Redcoats is comin'!"

Mrs. Priestly pushed past her and walked steadily down the stairs. A group of terror-stricken black faces of men and women and

children awaited her in the hall below. Standing on the bottom step, she spoke to them.

"I do not believe the soldiers will harm you," she said. "I shall go about my work as usual and trust in God."

"Dat's hit, trus' de Lawd!" cried an excited voice, and an old field hand dropped on his knees and began to pray with fervor. Like a match to tinder the infection of fear spread, and soon the hall was filled with wild cries as the negroes, swaying with hysterical excitement, knelt and called upon God for deliverance.

It was a terrifying moment. An approaching enemy without, panic within, and a fearful secret to guard in the midst of many dangers. Roger and Sally, pale but staunch, stood beside their mother on the stair as she tried to quell the rising tide of hysteria. Nearer and nearer came the drum-beats, and, terror yielding to curiosity, some of the negroes crowded about the windows.

"Dey's comin', dey's swarmin' up de hill

dis berry minute, — de yard is full of Red-coats, — come down, Lawd, — come down and help us — ”

The cries rose in chorus about the three gallant figures on the stairs. Mrs. Priestly stamped her foot.

“Be silent!” she shouted.

The command fell upon the ears of slaves, accustomed to obedience, and the cries sank to a moan, then ceased altogether, as their intrepid mistress, forcing her way through the swaying group, took up her stand by the front door of the house. Through the glass panels at the side she looked out on her lawn, and saw a group of British officers gathered there, looking up at the house, evidently discussing it as a desirable place for establishing headquarters.

“Go back to your cabins,” she commanded, turning to the frightened blacks. “I’m not afraid to meet them alone!”

Liza stood near her mistress, her arms about her son, a little boy of twelve. Perhaps she was stirred by a real devotion,



perhaps she felt safer near the staunch little figure of her mistress. At any rate she said with dogged determination, "I ain't gwine to leave you, Miss Liddy. Me and Timmy, — us is gwine to stay by."

"Very well, Liza," said Mrs. Priestly. "You are 'as safe here as you would be anywhere. I am sure of that."

Confidence a little restored by the courage of the mistress, the clamor subsided, and, instead of leaving the house in a mad stampede, the slaves went quietly out through the kitchen door and sped away to their cabins, leaving Mrs. Priestly, Sally, and Roger alone in the house with Liza and her boy.

The officers were now superintending the preparations for an army encampment. Heavy wagons had broken through hedges and plowed deep furrows in the lawn to bring necessary supplies, and soldiers were already setting up villages of tents farther down the slope near the river.

Mrs. Priestly watched them with stoic calm, only remarking to her children, "I thought surely they would have taken possession of the house by this time, but apparently they prefer their tents."

Nothing taxed the courage of mother and children more than the hour of waiting which followed, but at last a young lieutenant detached himself from the group of

officers and approached the door. When she saw him coming, Mrs. Priestly instantly seated herself in a large arm-chair in her drawing-room, called Roger and Sally to stand on either side of her, and, commanding Liza to answer the knocker, awaited his entrance.

Liza tremblingly opened the door, Timmy clinging to her skirts, and ushered the visitor into the drawing-room. Obviously embarrassed, the young man bowed low before the upright little figure in the arm-chair. Mrs. Priestly slightly inclined her head.

"To what am I indebted for this intrusion?" she inquired with cold dignity.

"General Howe's compliments, Madam," said the young man, "and he desires to speak with you at your convenience. He wishes to know whether you prefer to have him wait upon you here in your house, or if you wish to call upon him in his tent instead?"

Mrs. Priestly's eyes shot gleams of blue fire, but she merely said, "Mrs. Priestly



prefers to call upon General Howe in his tent."

"As you please, Madam," said the young man, "and since the General begs that he may see you as soon as possible, I am sent to conduct you there if that is your choice."

Mrs. Priestly rose. "I will accompany you at once," she said. "You may wait outside. I shall not be long."

Liza opened the door before him and bolted it after him, and Mrs. Priestly immediately went upstairs, Sally and Roger keeping close beside her. In her room Mrs. Priestly began hurriedly to unfasten her dress.

"What are you going to do, Mother?" cried Sally.

"General Howe shall not see the wife and children of General Priestly looking less than well conditioned," she answered. "Go to your rooms and put on your best clothes. I wish you to go with me."

When they returned to their mother's room, they found her arraying herself in a

gown of flowered taffeta, looped in panniers at the side over a quilted petticoat of blue silk. Her powdered hair was partly hidden by a charming cap of lace, and lace undersleeves fell over her slender hands. Her figure was so enlarged by the gold-weighted strips of linen she had wound about her body that she found to her dismay she could not bring her bodice together. With quick fingers she arranged a lace kerchief to fill in the gap, to conceal her changed appearance.

She looked at her children critically when they presented themselves before her, Sally in a flowered gown made much like her mother's, but without a train, and Roger in black satin knee-breeches, silk stockings, and a cocked hat. All three felt hot and uncomfortable, for the gold was heavy and weighed them down, but not one of them betrayed the fact by look or gesture; and as they swept down the broad stairway, one would have thought they were going to some revel, rather than to deliver themselves into the hands of their enemies.

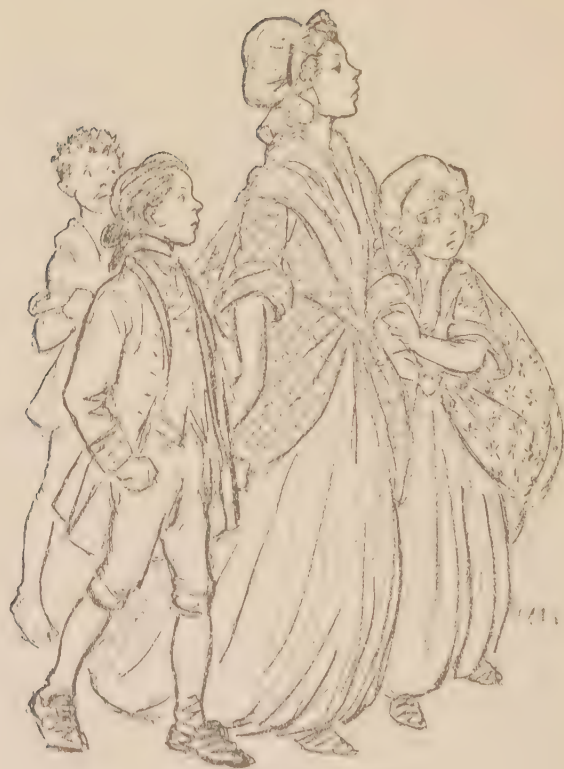
At the door Mrs. Priestly paused and spoke to Liza. "Timmy is to go with me," she said, "to carry my train."

Liza looked astonished and terrified but dared not refuse; and in a moment the little procession issued from the front door of the Priestly mansion, and, preceded by the young officer, made a stately progress toward the tents now scattered like mushrooms over the lawn.



## VI

A CALL UPON GENERAL HOWE



## VI

### A CALL UPON GENERAL HOWE

Two of the tents were larger than the others, and stood in commanding positions. Toward one of these the young officer led the way. At the entrance he paused, and, leaving them to wait, went inside to announce their arrival; then, holding back the tent-flap, he ushered them into the presence of General Howe, who rose to greet the visitors and bowed ceremoniously as the lieutenant pronounced her name.

"Your service, Madam," he said, glancing in surprise at the children, then, turning to a large florid man in the uniform of a general, he said, "I have the honor also to present to Mrs. Priestly, General Knyphausen, Commander of the Hessian troops now in the service of His Majesty."

Mrs. Priestly acknowledged the intro-

duction by a slight, a very slight, inclination of her head. Roger bowed and Sally curtsied. Timmy, meanwhile, stood holding his mistress's train, with his mouth open and his knees knocking together with fright. It is probable that the poor child expected to be impaled on a bayonet at any moment.

General Howe waved his hand toward a camp-chair. "Will Mrs. Priestly be seated?" he asked.

"Thank you," replied that lady in a voice as cool as if it had been blown from an iceberg, "I do not care to be seated in the presence of my country's enemies."

General Howe bit his lip and flushed angrily, and General Knyphausen, who had already seated himself, rose slowly and contemptuously to his feet. Though it made them furious to stand before her, their code of etiquette would not permit them to remain seated in her presence.

Mrs. Priestly faced them with her head held proudly erect, and for a moment no



one spoke. Her clear voice broke the silence.

"You desired to speak with me, I believe?"

General Howe glanced at Roger and Sally. "I should prefer to speak with you alone," he said.

"I prefer to have my children remain with me," replied Mrs. Priestly unmoved.

General Howe's face turned a deeper red; but he had his own purposes to carry out, and he was determined to keep his suave manner until he had gained his ends.

"Very well, Madam, as you will," he said.

General Knyphausen's shoulders heaved in a contemptuous shrug, and he shifted his weight from one foot to the other. Mrs. Priestly waited, clasping the hands of her two children. At last General Howe spoke.

"I have wished to see you, Madam," he said at last, "that I might give you a clear statement of your position, and place before you a great opportunity for service to your country and your family."

Mrs. Priestly bowed.

"It must be apparent to you," went on General Howe, "that the Colonies cannot possibly succeed in this war. What can your miserable underfed and half-clad army do against the power and majesty of England? Madam, it is absurd to expect anything but defeat! A few weeks or months at most, and your pretensions will have met their just reward. General Washington is not even defending your capital city! Philadelphia is already in our hands!"

Mrs. Priestly raised her brows. "You were about to show me how to serve my country?" she said, icily.

General Howe cleared his throat, and his brow darkened. It was really difficult to keep his temper with this exasperating woman. He wanted to swear, but controlled himself.

"The proposition I have to offer you," the suave voice went on, "should appeal to you irresistibly both as a wife and as a patriot. Your country is England. Your

loyalty is to her. Defeat is the hope of these Colonies! They cannot prosper by themselves as they can under the British flag. Your success would be your ruin!"

"Yes?" said Mrs. Priestly as he paused again. Roger and Sally felt her hands tighten on theirs, and her whole body tremble with the tension of her anger.

"We are aware," went the smooth voice, "that your husband is in the confidence of General Washington, and that you are in the confidence of your husband. You undoubtedly have in your possession important information which would be of great value to us. We are informed that money and supplies are now on their way to the American army, and have reason to believe that some of them are secreted in your house. To divulge these secrets would bring this farce of war to a more speedy end. You would be the means of helping your country, as you call it, to peace and prosperity, and—" here his voice assumed a more threatening tone—"and you will save your

husband from a shameful death! When this war is over, all those who have taken a prominent part in it will be held as traitors, and you know how England treats traitors."

At this terrible threat Roger and Sally felt their mother's body sway slightly, as if she might sink to the floor, and they threw their arms about her. She drew them to her and faced her enemy without a word, her head still proudly erect. General Knyphausen appeared inexpressibly bored and again shifted his weight. General Howe, looking more and more uncomfortable, hastened to the end of his distasteful task.

"Your opportunity lies here, Madam," he said. "Give us the information you hold, and you will not only deserve the thanks of your country, whose welfare is jeopardized by these misguided rebels, but you will save your husband's life. Instead of having all his property taken from him and dying a traitor's death, he will be given

an estate and a title in England, and you will be lifted to a social station which you are well fitted to adorn."

He stopped and looked at his victim, a slight smile lifting the corners of his mouth. Mrs. Priestly looked him in the eye.

"Is that all you have to say?" she asked in an even tone.

"Only this," said the General. "It will come to the same thing in the end; for if you refuse what we ask, we shall be obliged to search your house. It would be easier for you to spare us this necessity. Soldiers, you know, are not too careful. Sometimes fire—" he paused, and fingered some papers lying on the table before him.

"Then this is my answer," blazed Mrs. Priestly. "I should despise myself if I were to consider your proposal for a single instant," and, turning her back upon the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in America, she swept proudly out of the tent, with her children by her side and the faithful Timmy trotting after.

What went on in the tent after her departure, of course she could not know. Probably General Knyphausen sat down; probably, too, there may have been some language less restrained, now that their well-laid plan had been defeated by the obstinacy of one determined little woman. The two men could not have been in a cheerful mood, even with the power in their hands and the will in their hearts to punish her as they thought she deserved.

When she reached the front door of her house it was thrown open by Liza, who clasped Timmy in her arms, then fled at once to her cabin, unable longer to stand the strain of such close proximity to the seat of war.

Mrs. Priestly walked like a queen as long as she was in sight of her enemy, but when the door shut them from sight, she clasped her children in her arms, and all three sank upon the great sofa in the drawing-room, spent with the strain of that terrible interview, and trembling both with the weight



of the gold they carried upon them and with fear lest it be discovered.

For a few moments they sat thus, Mrs. Priestly dry-eyed and firm, with the two children sobbing upon her neck, waiting for the next act in this hideous drama. They had not long to wait. Soon there were slow steps on the verandah, and a knock at the door. As Liza had fled, there was no servant to answer it, and Mrs. Priestly herself threw it open and faced once more the young lieutenant. He bowed.

"General Howe's compliments, Madam, and he desires you to leave your house at once, *taking nothing with you.*" He emphasized these words.

"Very well," said Mrs. Priestly. "You may tell General Howe Mrs. Priestly will comply with his request as soon as she can dress more suitably for traveling."

The young man bowed and took his leave to report her answer, and the moment he was gone she turned to the children.

"Go at once, as you are," she said. "Run



down the lane back of the house. The soldiers are all in front and will probably not notice you. Tell Uncle Jude and Aunt Hitty I am coming and to be ready to start the moment I appear."

She threw a cape about Sally's shoulders, thrust Roger's arms into a loose coat, and sent them out the kitchen door, unfastening her own gown as she ran. She watched them from the window as she tore off her flowered taffeta, and arrayed herself with all possible speed in a homespun gown and kerchief, and saw them disappear unchallenged down the lane; then, flinging a cape over her shoulders, and seizing an old bonnet, she fled down the echoing stairs of the empty house, and in another moment was outside the kitchen door, and on her way to the farm barn with old Sailor by her side.

She had hoped to get away before a guard should be sent to see that the General's orders were carried out, but the British officers were not so careless as she had hoped. She had not yet reached the stables

when a stern voice called, "Halt!" and she turned, to confront a young soldier who was just taking up his station at the back door.

She stopped and waited until the man reached her. Old Sailor growled, and the hair stood stiffly upon his spine as the man approached. He would have sprung at him had she not held him by the collar.

"Take off your cape," commanded the guard. Mrs. Priestly took it off and handed it to him in spite of old Sailor's protest. The man shook it, examined it to see if it had any pockets, felt for papers which might have been concealed in the lining, and handed it back to her.

"Take off your bonnet," was his next order. She obeyed, and he examined that also, and with such clumsy fingers that she almost smiled to see him. Tied to her waist was a pocket bag, dangling by silken cords, and this too he opened, and, finding in it nothing but a handkerchief and a comb, returned it to her with an awkward bow.

"Orders, ma'am," he said, looking un-



comfortable. "You're to take nothing with you, you know."

Mrs. Priestly, still holding the growling dog with one hand, tapped her foot impatiently, her head in the air. "Do you wish



to examine my clothes further, or am I at liberty to go?" she asked. She released Sailor's collar and, spreading her arms mockingly, turned slowly round before the soldier, exhibiting her still slender figure from every angle. She lifted her ample skirt to show him the hem. She shook out

her kerchief to prove there was nothing concealed in its folds.

Old Sailor took advantage of his liberty to advance slowly, with his mistress, toward the man, showing his teeth in a dangerous grin as he did so.

"Call off your dog, ma'am," urged the soldier, backing away, but Mrs. Priestly appeared not to hear him and continued her progress.

"Perhaps you wish to take off my shoes," said she scornfully, holding out a shapely little foot. "There might be money to pay the army hidden in them, you know!"

The man looked at the foot and the dog, and backed off still farther. Mrs. Priestly pursued him.

"You haven't examined my hair," she went on relentlessly. "There might be provisions for the army under my braids!"

The man looked positively alarmed. "No, — no, — ma'am," he stammered, glancing apprehensively at the dog, who seemed more than ever inclined to end the

interview in his own way. "I'm sure the General would not wish you to be put to further indignities. You may go."

Without so much as a glance in his direction Mrs. Priestly again seized Sailor's collar and resumed her interrupted journey. She walked with a calm and unhurried step until she was out of sight, then, fearing that she might meet other guards less easily managed, she hastened by the empty cabins deserted by the fleeing slaves, and was soon far on the road to the rendezvous.

VII  
THE ESCAPE





## VII

### THE ESCAPE

SHE found the horses hitched to the hay-wagon and Uncle Jude, whip in hand, standing beside them with Aunt Hitty sitting on top of the load. There was no one else in sight.

"Sally! Roger!" she gasped. "Aren't they here?"

Two heads immediately rose like two suns, from behind the mountain of hay, and Aunt Hitty's voice allayed her fears.

"Heah dey is, right along side ob dis ol' niggah," she said, "and heah dey's gwine ter 'stablish deyselves, and dey ain' no Red-coats gwine to git 'em, nuther, yo' heah me! You climb up too, Miss Liddy, honey. Yo' looks plumb beat out."

"Where is the bag of buckwheat?" asked Mrs. Priestly.

"Laws, honey, what yo' want wid dat ar buckwheat?" asked Aunt Hitty. "Hit's right in front ob de load. I done spread one ob dem comfo'tahs ober hit, fo' Jude ter sit on ter drive. De othah one is up heah on top ob de load waitin' fer yo'."

"Open the bag," commanded Mrs. Priestly. Mystified but obedient, Uncle Jude untied it, and his mistress slipped inside a small but heavy bag containing a collection of old pieces of metal, buckles off of harnesses, nails, a horse-shoe or two, and other rubbish which she had collected and hidden in the barn for just this purpose. Sally and Roger, though she had not explained it to them, saw through her strategy at once, but Aunt Hitty watched the proceeding with great concern, evidently fearing that trouble had unhinged her mistress's mind.

The moment the bag of buckwheat was in place again and covered with the comforter, Mrs. Priestly lifted herself to the wheel, and, climbing from it to the top of

the load, settled herself beside Sally and Roger.

"Now, Jude, quick, quick!" she commanded. "Go down the back way. Keep off the high road. No one must suspect that there is any one here but you and Aunt Hitty. The children and I will hide in the hay, and you must get us and the provisions away from here as soon as you can."

"Yassum, yassum, Miss Liddy," said Uncle Jude, "I's comin'," and, climbing laboriously to a seat at the front of the wagon, he shook the reins. "Git up thar!" he shouted to the two strong horses, and the heavy load began to move.

Down the inclined slope from the barn door it rumbled, making such a noise on the wooden planks that it seemed to the three hidden in the hay as if the whole British Army must hear it, and be on their trail in an instant. Behind the team walked old Sailor, following the horses, as he often did on happier journeys to and from the hayfield.

There was every reason for the fears which shook Mrs. Priestly and the children. They had a large sum of money concealed on their persons, money upon which the whole success of their country's cause might depend. It was suspected by the enemy that the gold was in her possession, concealed in the bag of buckwheat. Already the house had been visited by a spy, who had seen the bag of buckwheat deposited in the store-room. She had been quick-witted enough to thwart the attempt to enter the house and steal it in the night, and she had cleverly convinced the guard, with Sailor's help, that she was leaving the house "taking nothing with her." Yet she had in fact defied the British Commander-in-Chief and disobeyed his orders. If, upon searching the house, they should discover that the money was gone, and that she had eluded them, they would probably pursue her, and if overtaken she could expect no mercy for herself or her children.

Her husband's life was already in jeop-

ard and further disaster threatened him. No wonder she shivered with fear as the wagon rumbled down the shaded lane and came out on a rough back road which, though not far from their home, wound its course among the hills to the north, away from the river. Her means of concealment were well chosen. She and her children were invisible, and the wagon might have belonged to any farmer.

Uncle Jude drove steadily along, chewing a straw and looking as innocent as the hay itself, and above the back of the load Aunt Hitty's red turban rose like a flaming beacon.

"Keep going north, Jude," Mrs. Priestly's voice counseled. "I don't know the roads, so you'll just have to follow in the general direction, and by and by perhaps we can inquire."

"Yassum, Miss Liddy. I hears yuh," answered Uncle Jude.

For some time they drove on in silence broken only by the creaking of the heavy wagon, the regular thud of the horses'

hoofs, and a frequent bumping noise as they jolted over a stone or struck a sun-dried rut.

The day was cool and bright, with a hint of autumn haze in the air, and the beautiful countryside looked so peaceful as it lay sleeping in the sun it did not seem possible that war and bloodshed and suffering could find a place in it anywhere.

Exhausted by grief, and lulled by the steady creaking of the wagon, the two children fell asleep, and Mrs. Priestly herself sank into a troubled doze.

It was late in the morning when they had started on their journey, and by three o'clock in the afternoon they were some miles on their way. They had stopped for nothing thus far, but now it became necessary to rest, in order to feed and water the faithful horses, so Uncle Jude kept a watchful eye for a suitable and safe spot. He halted at last far up on a side-hill beside a spring that sent a little stream of water trickling across the road.

Mrs. Priestly lifted her head when the



wagon stopped, and looked about over the sunny landscape. The Twins stirred and sat up. Aunt Hitty straightened out her cramped legs and groaned.

"I feels like a settin' hen," she announced, "an' I ain't liable to hatch nuthin' nuther." She rubbed her legs. "I's took root, dat's what I is."

"I'm hungry," said Roger. Sally drooped against her mother. "Maybe I'm hungry too," she said.

Mrs. Priestly looked dismayed. "Oh," she moaned, "I never thought of food, either for ourselves or the horses. What shall we do?"

"Ne' mine, honey," said Aunt Hitty, rising to the emergency. "Jude, he brung some grain fo' de horses, and a bucket to fetch water for 'em, and I done tuk every-thing I could lay mah han's on dat was in de pantry, when you sont word to go."

"Hitty, you're wonderful," said Mrs. Priestly gratefully.

"Yassum, Miss Liddy, honey, reckon I is," said Aunt Hitty showing her teeth in a cheerful grin. "I dassent trus' to no manna in dis yer wilderness. I reckon de Lawd He ain' gwine puffo'm no merricle to feed folks dat's so skeered dey passes deir own vittles right by."

She burrowed in the hay as she spoke, and brought forth a bundle, which she



opened. Dere's yo' repas'," she said, and laid before them cold ham, corn bread, cheese, and some early apples. Mrs. Priestly divided the store in five parts, and handed to each one his share, and for a few moments they paid strict attention to their food, while old Sailor went off to forage for himself.

The horses needed time to finish their grain, and while Uncle Jude attended to their needs, Mrs. Priestly, Roger, Sally, and Aunt Hitty climbed down from the load to refresh themselves by a drink from the spring and by stretching their cramped legs. Then the two children and their mother walked slowly on up the hill. The gold, as well as their sorrows, burdened them, and, coming to a turn in the road near the summit, they stopped to rest, and to gaze at a new view of the countryside spread out before them.

"Look," cried Sally, "there's the river!"

There truly was the Schuylkill, winding like a silver thread in and out among the



distant blue hills. On top of one of the hills a speck of white caught their eyes.

"Look, mother," cried Roger, excitedly. "I believe that's our house! See the two wings, one on each side, and the stables?"

Mrs. Priestly shaded her eyes to look. "Yes," she said, "I can see the tents beyond it, too."

For a few moments they stood choking back their tears as they gazed on the home they so dearly loved; then Mrs. Priestly gave a little gasp and wrung her hands.

“Look, oh, look!” she cried. “Oh, how could he do it?”

There, rising from the roof of their home, the children saw a thin column of smoke. As they watched it, spellbound with terror, the smoke quickly increased in volume, shot through with yellow tongues of flame, and soon the stables were burning also. Mrs. Priestly sank down upon a stone and, burying her face in her hands, burst into a passion of tears. The children had never before seen their brave mother cry, and, overcome by this new disaster, they fell to their knees on the ground beside her, crying too as if their hearts would break.

Aunt Hitty heard these sounds of grief, and came panting up the hill after them, to find the three weeping in each other's arms with old Sailor whining beside them and trying to lick their hands.

There had been plenty of cause for tears before, yet not one had been shed, and Aunt Hitty gazed on the scene with astonishment and dismay. Then her eye too caught the yellow glare of the burning house, and, hastening to the heartbroken trio, she knelt beside them and stretched her arms about them.

"Dere, dere, honey," she crooned, patting first one and then another as she could reach them. "Come to Aunt Hitty! She knows ol' man Trubble so well she kin call him by his fust name! 'Pears like dis yer mought be de day ob judgment hisself, but I reckon dis too will pass along by, and dere'll be to-morrer jus' like dey always has been! Don' yo' cry, honey! De ahm ob de Lawd, hit ain' sho'tened, and He gwine to settle wid dem Redcoats, an' He ain' gwine to give 'em no sho't measure nuther. Dry yo' eyes! Tears,—dey blin's yo' eyes to duty! We got to git dem hams an' bacons to de ahmy, to giv' 'em mo' strength for to wallop dese yer Redcoats,

and Jude is comin' up de hill dis instant minute!"

Making a supreme effort to suppress her convulsive sobs, Mrs. Priestly rose, patted Aunt Hitty, dried her eyes, and lifted the children to their feet; and when the wagon reached them, she climbed to the top and sat down in the hay with a face as calm and set as if it had been carved in stone.

Aunt Hitty pointed out the conflagration to Uncle Jude, who gazed at it in dumb dismay, until they were ready to start again. Then the wagon continued its creaking progress, and a turn in the road soon hid the hideous spectacle from their eyes.

For a long time they jogged steadily on, the children and their mother lying silent in the hay, spent with grief, while Aunt Hitty sat bolt-upright, her broad shoulders and red turban towering protectingly above them. The long September afternoon was drawing to a close, and the shadow of the hay-wagon crowned with Aunt Hitty's turban, curiously elongated, stretched far

to the eastward beside them. Each mile they covered lessened their sense of insecurity, and their fear of being followed. Yet the dangers were by no means over; and their sense of desolation increased, for night would soon be falling and they knew they were still far from their destination.

At last Mrs. Priestly lifted her head and looked across the intervening landscape to where the sun was sinking slowly toward the western horizon. Uncle Jude still sat hunched up at the front of the wagon, driving doggedly on. The road had been lonely and deserted all the way, for there were few farms in the region, and they had purposely chosen unfrequented ways.

They were therefore the more startled when the stillness of the countryside was broken by the clatter of horses' hoofs on the road behind them. Old Sailor at once began to bark, and Mrs. Priestly instantly ducked her head again, murmuring a warning to the children as she did so. Aunt Hitty drew one of the comforters over them

so as to conceal them from view entirely, and, drawing herself up more majestically than ever, surveyed the road with the dignity of a monarch being carried to his coronation.

"Don't yo' be no wise tarrified, Miss Liddy, honey," she murmured as the sounds drew nearer. "Dey is comin' roun' de bend ob de road, three of them, but if dey is Britishers dey ain' gwine to git nuthin' but trubble out'n dis yer load! Der's plenty of hit,—'nuff to ration de whole ahmy ef dat's what dey's lookin' fer! Jes' you lay still and let Aunt Hitty tend to 'em."

She ceased her crooning murmur, for now the three horsemen were alongside the load, and looking curiously up at it. They could not see the top, nor look down into the hollow where Mrs. Priestly and the children lay hidden, but they could see Uncle Jude driving stolidly on, looking very stupid and frightened; and they couldn't miss Aunt Hitty if they tried.

For a short distance they walked their horses to keep beside the load, occasionally slashing with the whip in the direction of old Sailor, who nimbly got out of the way and went on barking at their horses' heels. Then one of the men rode forward and, seizing Selim's bridle, brought the wagon to a standstill.

"Whuffo' is you traffickin' wid dat ar beas'?" demanded Aunt Hitty, lifting herself to her knees and looking down on the three men like a thunder-cloud about to burst.

The man paid no attention to her, but sat with his horse reined in keeping a firm hold on Selim's bridle as the other two men stopped on either side of the wagon close to Uncle Jude.

"Now, then, old pop-eye," cried one of them, "hand over that bag."

Uncle Jude remained speechless, his eyes rolling wildly from one to the other of his captors, and his hands clutching the reins.

"Wh — what bag?" he managed to articulate.



"You know well enough what bag," shouted the man. "Come, hand it over quick, or it will be the worse for you," and he gave him a poke in the ribs with his pistol.

"Yo' let dat ol' man alone," shouted Aunt Hitty, looming above him, "lessen I put a conjur on yo' all dat'll make yo' eyes drop right outen yo' heads and yo' meat rot on yo' bones! Git along with yo'. Dey ain' no bag but dat ar bag ob buckwheat he's settin' on."

"Hah," shouted the man exultingly, "that's just what we're after, and trouble enough we've had following your trail to get it!"

Aunt Hitty leaned still farther to get a better view of the men's faces, partly hidden under their hats, nearly smothering Roger as she did so. "Whuffo' is yo' so sot on gettin' dat ar buckwheat?" she snorted, as she caught a glimpse of a bandaged leg and a scraggly gray beard on one of the men. "Is you wantin' a poultice fer yo' sore

laig, or is yo' sick daughtah in Philadelphy honin' fer some buckwheat cakes?"

Resenting her sarcasm, the man ripped out an oath. "Never you mind what we want it for, old thunder and lightnin'," he said, shaking his fist at her, "we want it, that's enough, and if you don't hand it over peaceable, we'll take it anyway, and set fire to your wagon besides, same as we did to the house back yonder!"

Uncle Jude had stood up during the moment occupied by this passage at arms, and was tremblingly removing the comforter from over the bag. The moment he saw it, the man with the bandaged leg stood up in his stirrups, seized it, and, swinging it across his saddle-horn, wheeled his horse and started back at full gallop over the road by which they had just come, yelling with exultation. The man in front let go Selim's bridle and sped away after him, closely followed by the third, with old Sailor barking helplessly in their wake.

When they were gone, Aunt Hitty sank

back into her hollow in the hay and, turning back the comforter, uncovered the huddled forms of her mistress and the children.

"Ef dat ar onrageous, black-hearted maraudin' ol' thief ain't de berry spit and image ob dat ar beggar I done rastle up a brekfus' fer yistiddy mawnin', den my name' ain't Hitty!" she gasped, "an' he done dropped his diseasiness somewhere along de big road, fer he sholy is spryer dan a niggah leavin' a hen-roost to-day! What I cain't git no light on is whuffo' he was so sot on dat ar buckwheat!"

Mrs. Priestly raised her wan and haggard face from the hay. "I know why," she said, "but don't stop to talk now. They think there's a bag of money in the buckwheat, and when they find what is in it they may return. Hurry, hurry! we must get to some hiding-place as soon as possible."

Uncle Jude gathered up the reins and swung his whip over the horses' backs, and away they rattled again over the rough country road.

For a few moments Aunt Hitty sat in stunned silence; then she said, "But, Miss Liddy, honey, I's been ponderin', an' I axes yo',—whar *kin* you hide a load of hay?"



VIII  
ON THE WAY



## VIII

### ON THE WAY

ON and on plodded the weary horses, patiently obeying the urging of Uncle Jude and the unaccustomed whip; and patiently Mrs. Priestly, Roger, and Sally hid themselves in their cramped quarters; and patiently above them brooded the monumental figure of Aunt Hitty.

"Take the first wooded lane that we come to, Jude," urged Mrs. Priestly. "We can at least throw them off the track for a little while."

"Yassum, yassum," answered Uncle Jude, belaboring the poor bewildered and weary Selim.

Fear must have sharpened his eyes, for he swerved the horses suddenly and sharply to the left as he spoke, and entered a cart-path, the opening to which was so over-

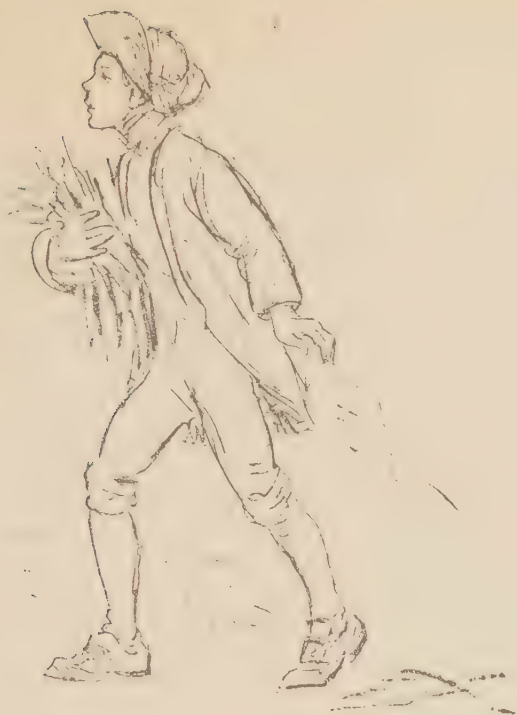
grown with tangled thickets of sumac and wild grape-vines that it was scarcely discernible from the road. The entrance was narrow, the ground rough and uneven, and the swaying wagon lurched this way and that, leaving handfuls of hay caught on the bushes on both sides as they passed.

"Fo' de land's sake, Jude, yo' sho'ly is leavin' invitations to foller us. Dey cain't scarcely miss de tracks of dis yer load," cried Aunt Hitty, twisting her neck to look behind.

"Stop, Jude. Stop a moment," commanded Mrs. Priestly, "and let me and the children get down! We will take off the wisps of hay from the bushes, while you and Hitty drive farther up the lane. As soon as we can we will follow you. Keep Sailor with you, and keep him quiet if you can."

Uncle Jude obediently stopped the horses, and in a moment the children and their mother were back at the entrance to the woods, carefully removing every strand of hay which had caught on branches as they passed.





"I'll tell you what I'm going to do, Mother," said Roger. "I'm going to run up the road a bit and scatter some of this hay as if it had fallen off the load. Maybe it will fool them into thinking we've gone on."

"That's a wise plan, Roger," answered his mother.

She gave him the handful she had gleaned,

and Sally added hers. Roger gathered them in his arms and hurried up the road, dropping handfuls of hay here and there as he ran. No sooner had he disappeared than Sally and her mother, looking back over the way they had just traveled, saw three horsemen in the distance, and in a minute the ominous beat of the horses' hoofs again reached their ears.

"*Oh!*" breathed Sally, "Roger's right in their path!" She started impulsively to follow and warn him, but her mother checked her.

"You'll only make matters worse. Stay where you are," she said. "We shall have to trust Roger."

Quickly they hid themselves behind the thicket of sumacs, and waited.

"Oh," whispered Sally, clinging to her mother, "what if Sailor should bark?"

Mrs. Priestly clasped her little girl in her arms, and her lips moved as if in prayer, but she made no reply. For some moments they waited, listening intently as the hoof-



beats drew nearer and nearer, and soon, peering cautiously through the tangled branches of the thicket, they saw the three horsemen stopping in the road. Their hearts almost stopped, too, as they heard a voice say with an oath: "Here's a wood road. Maybe they've gone in here"; and the man with the bandaged leg rode into the lane, passing so near Sally and her mother that they could almost have touched him.

Crouching behind the bushes, they watched him as he rode a short distance up the lane, then, wheeling his horse, called back to his companions: "No sign of 'em here. The place is too narrow for a hay-wagon to get through, anyway."

"Here's a wisp of hay fallen off the load," answered one of the men in the road. "They've gone on, but they can't be far ahead of us. We can overtake a load of hay, I should hope."

"Just wait till I lay my hands on that old black woman," growled the man with the bandaged leg, as he dug his spurs into

his horse's sides and rejoined his comrades.  
"She'll put a conjure on me, will she? I'll spoil her beauty for her!"

"Better not meddle with one of them black witches," counselled one of his companions.  
"They do say they traffic with the devil himself. There's chances enough in this world without pickin' trouble with the next! Come along."

"Here's more hay," called the third man, who had gone still farther up the road.  
"Don't fool away any more time. There's no rat in that trap," and away the three galloped in the gathering dusk.

As soon as they dared, Mrs. Priestly and Sally, relieved that the dog had not betrayed them, but overcome with fears for Roger's safety, crawled stooping to the roadside and peered anxiously after them. They saw the three figures pause as they came upon more wisps of hay, then, apparently convinced they were following the right trail, gallop on again.

No sign of Roger!

"He must have hidden in the bushes beside the road," whispered Mrs. Priestly. "He will be back soon." They sat down on a fallen log to wait for him.

The sound of the horses' feet finally dwindled away into silence, and still no Roger. The long September twilight deepened into darkness, and strange soft sounds rose all about the two lonely figures on the log. The breeze murmured in the leaves, katydids argued in the grass, and overhead there was the whirr and swoop of swallows' wings. Once an owl hooted. It seemed to the two watchers that they had been waiting for hours, so much did anxiety lengthen time, when at last a dark spot appeared in the deepening gray of the roadway, and the welcome sound of footsteps on the hard ground announced Roger's approach. Sally and her mother sprang forward to meet him.

"Oh, Roger," said Sally, throwing her arms about him. "The man with the bandaged leg came right into the lane beside us,

and if you hadn't scattered the hay on the road and fooled them they might have found the wagon!"

Even in the darkness they could see the proud expanse of Roger's smile.

"What kept you so long?" asked his mother, "and where were you?"

"Hidden in the grass," answered Roger. "There's a lane that turns off to the left beyond here, and I wanted to see if they followed the road or turned off."

"Good boy!" said his mother, patting him. "A man could not have done better. Which way did they go?"

"Followed the road," said Roger.

"Let us get back to the wagon as soon as possible," said Mrs. Priestly. "We have many things to think about."

At once they turned and plunged into the lane, felt their way through the woods, stumbling over roots and getting caught by brambles in the darkness, until at last the great black mass of the hay-wagon loomed in front of them, and they heard a welcom-

ing bark from old Sailor and Aunt Hitty's voice calling, "Who's dar?"

Seated once more on top of the load, they held a council of war. Roger and Sally were for going on at once, and at first Mrs. Priestly considered it, but wiser counsel prevailed.

"Dem hosses is plumb tuckered out," said Aunt Hitty. "Dey couldn't git away from a mud turtle."

"No mo' dey couldn't," agreed Uncle Jude.

"If the men ride on and do not find us, they are likely to come back on their tracks, and if we were to go on now we might run right into them," said Mrs. Priestly.

"But we are hungry," said Roger. "If we got away, maybe we could find a farmhouse where we could get something to eat."

"Dere's ham and sassingers and bacon a plenty at de bottom ob de wagon," said Aunt Hitty.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Priestly, "but we



should have to unload the hay to get them, and we should not dare make a fire to cook even if we had them. No, we must just go hungry, I think, like the other soldiers."

She patted Roger in the dark, and, remembering their father's salute to them, neither Roger nor Sally said another word about food. Instead they curled up in the hay and settled themselves to rest, while Uncle Jude unhitched the horses, and, tethering them to the wagon, let them munch hay for their supper.

Suddenly Roger sat up again. "We mustn't all sleep at once," he said. "Somebody ought to stand guard. I'll do it, Mother. You women must rest!"

His mother smiled tenderly and proudly to herself in the dark. "Yes," she said, "but it would be better to take turns. Aunt Hitty and I will take the first two hours. Then we will waken you for the midnight watch." Turning to Jude, she said: "You may take some hay and make a bed on the ground. The rest of us will stay up here."

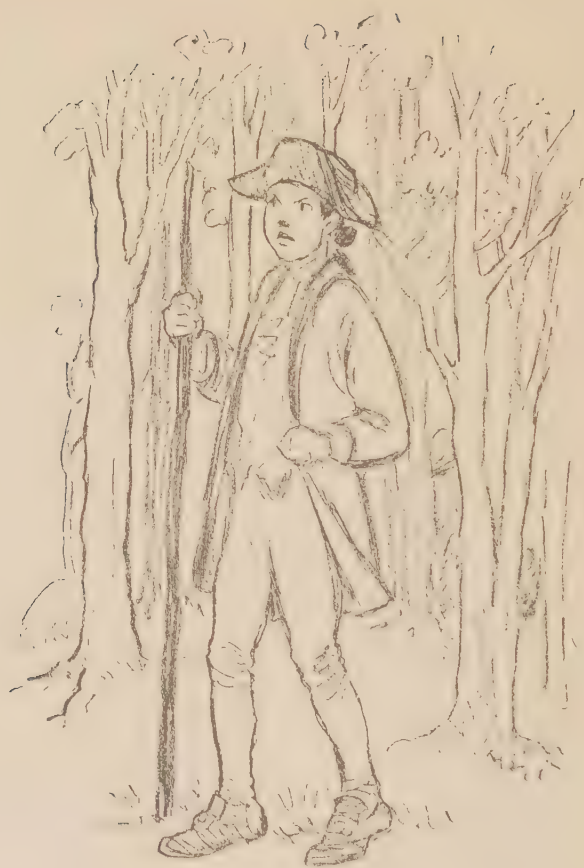
"I'm going to wake up and watch with Roger," announced Sally. "He might not like to be alone in the dark."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Roger, but he did not refuse Sally's offer, and again their mother smiled to herself.

This arrangement was agreed upon, and soon the sound of Uncle Jude's snores reverberated through the silence of the night.

"What I done tol' yo', Miss Liddy, honey," said Aunt Hitty. "I reckon dey ain't man nor beast dat wouldn't be plumb scarrified listenin' to dat ol' man. Yo' heah me, honey, dey ain't no Redcoats gwine meddle wid dat ar noise!"

IX  
IN THE FOREST



## IX

### IN THE FOREST

"It's midnight, dear," whispered a gentle voice in Roger's ear, "and I promised to wake you. Shall I watch a while longer?"

Roger tried to sit up, but, drugged with sleep, fell back into the hay again. "No, no, Mother," he murmured, struggling with sleep. "I'm wide awake. You must rest."

Painfully he dragged himself to a sitting posture, and, climbing over Aunt Hitty, who was already asleep, he slid from the back of the wagon to the ground. "I can stay awake better if I stand up," he said over his shoulder to his mother as he dropped out of sight.

"I'm afraid Sally will think I haven't kept my promise if I don't waken her too," whispered his mother doubtfully, leaning down to speak to him.

"Oh, let her sleep. I want her to," urged Roger. "I'll explain to her in the morning."

"Very well," said his mother, "I'll leave it to you. If you hear anything, speak to me at once."

By the light of the waning moon she watched the shadowy figure of her young sentinel, until, utterly exhausted, she too fell asleep.

Alone in the black, still shadows of the wood, Roger paced back and forth, back and forth, until it seemed as if the whole night must have passed. Mysterious sounds of the forest rose all about him; twigs snapped, the wind whispered uneasily in the leaves, and a whip-poor-will cried and cried.

"That's just a whip-poor-will. That's just an owl. That's just the wind in the trees," Roger kept telling himself; but there were strange waves of feeling up and down his spine as he listened, and he longed eagerly for the day.

Night came to an end at last, and with

the first pink streaks in the eastern sky Mrs. Priestly woke, to find Roger fast asleep in the hay beside her. Uncle Jude was sitting hunched up on his pallet of hay with his back against a tree, trying his best to keep his eyes open, and old Sailor sat beside him. Aunt Hitty and Sally, snuggled down in the hay, were still sleeping soundly.

There had been no disturbance in the night. Once during her watch Mrs. Priestly had heard the clatter of horses' feet on the road, but there had been no pause as they passed the entrance to the lane, and she was encouraged by this to hope that their pursuers might have given up the chase.

She took the comb from her pocket and made her hair neat, knelt in the hay to pray for protection and guidance in the perils that awaited them in the day just dawning, then woke the children with a kiss. Waking Aunt Hitty was no such easy matter, but finally she too sat up, rubbing her eyes and trying to remember where she was and how she got there.

Uncle Jude, meanwhile, had gone with Sailor in search of water, and he now appeared carrying a pail, into which the horses eagerly thrust their noses. Climbing down from their perch on top of the load, Mrs. Priestly, the children, and Aunt Hitty refreshed themselves by washing their hands and faces in the running stream that Uncle Jude had discovered, and by six o'clock all were ready to resume their journey.

Uncle Jude succeeded after much maneuvering in getting the wagon turned about and headed for the road again, and was soon once more in his seat driving the precious load along the deserted road.

On and on they jogged, keeping a sharp lookout in both directions, urging the horses to their best speed, and trying to forget that they were breakfastless as well as supperless. If they had been less anxious, the beauty of the morning might almost have made up for lack of food, for the sun rose upon the hills of eastern



Pennsylvania in a glory of pink clouds, promising a clear day to the shelterless wanderers.

Aunt Hitty was disposed to take a cheerful view of their situation, forlorn as it seemed. "Dat ar sunshine," she remarked, "hit suttinly is warmin'. Hit done tuk de night chill outen my bones. De Lawd He mighty tempery, a temperin' de wind to us sho'n lambs."

"You can always find something to be thankful for; can't you, Hitty?" said Mrs. Priestly, giving her faithful servitor a smile which seemed to Sally and Roger as comforting as the sunlight itself.

"Yassum, Miss Liddy, honey," answered Aunt Hitty. "I reckon things mought be a heap wuss dan what dey is. Bress de Lawd, hit ain't rainin'."

Higher and higher climbed the sun, flooding with color the valley of the Schuylkill, now once more spread out before them. Blue jays sounded their harsh cries over the woods, hawks sailed in huge

circles above them, and the crowing of cocks mingled with the gentler music of song-birds and told them they were nearing human habitations once more. The region was very little settled as yet, but as the little caravan plodded on its way, smoke rose high in the air from the chimneys of isolated farms, and once they passed so near to one that they even caught a tantalizing whiff of the bacon that the farmer's wife was cooking for breakfast. In one field a man was busy with fall plowing, and farther on a small boy drove a cow down a shady lane to pasture after the morning milking.

Their road had so far been in a northerly direction, but now Mrs. Priestly had Uncle Jude turn westward, hoping to find some obscure road that would take them toward the river once more. From the top of some hill she hoped also that she might see the encampment or at least discover some means of locating it. Soon they began to see sheep and cattle being driven in

the same direction, as if they might be intended as supplies for the army, and, following one such herd, they found themselves emerging on the road that they had so carefully avoided the day before.

Though they were now near the river once more, they were many miles farther up stream than Oak Hill, where General Priestly's house had stood. Over this road supplies of all kinds were obliged to pass, and progress grew increasingly difficult, for their single load of hay could scarcely dispute the right of way with droves of cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses that were being brought by farmers across many weary and dangerous miles to help support the cause of independence.

The task of feeding an army in a sparsely settled country with few roads and no other means of transportation than that afforded by wagons and by the cattle themselves, seemed an almost impossible task, but added to this was the further and overwhelming fact that the larger army of the

enemy lay only a few miles away, and that they too were trying to live off the country. Supply-trains were in constant danger of being attacked, and detachments of soldiers from the Continental Army patrolled up and down the road, guarding the fords, where skirmishes often took place, causing the peaceful hills to echo with the sound of guns.

Of this Mrs. Priestly was well aware, but she kept the knowledge to herself, wishing not to add another burden to the load of fear, hunger, and grief that was being borne so bravely by Roger and Sally and her two faithful and courageous slaves.

As they emerged from the side road, they fell in behind a drove of some twenty head of cattle in charge of a colored man on horseback. Suddenly Sailor gave a joyful bark, and Roger, catching a glimpse of the black face, shouted: "Mother, Mother! It's Major Buckley's Sam!"

Aunt Hitty, Sally, and Mrs. Priestly, all craned their necks over the edge of the

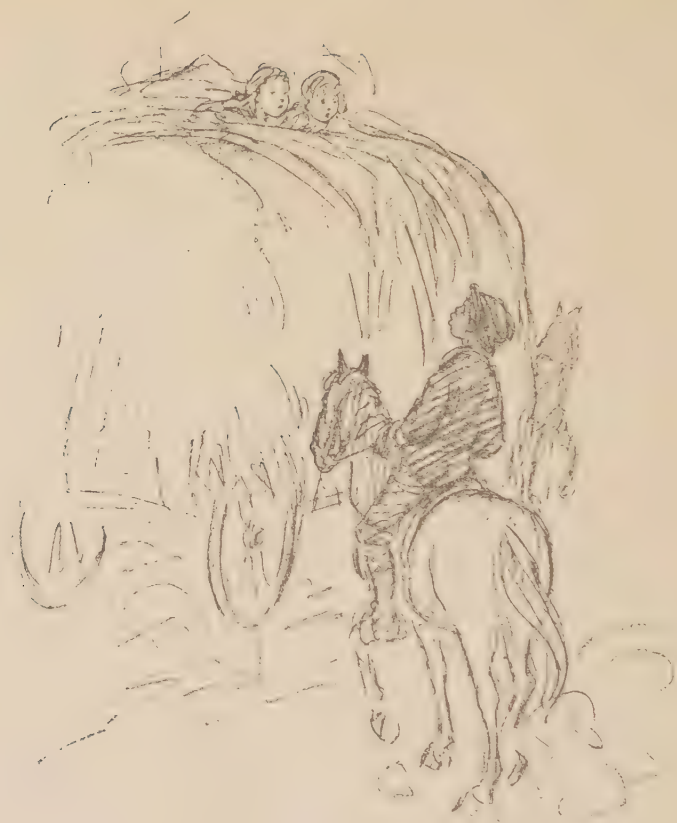
mountain of hay to look more closely at the black horseman. He turned at that moment to gallop after a cow that had decided to return home, and as he passed them they saw that it truly was Sam.

"Hi, there, Sam," shouted Roger, and Aunt Hitty seconded him with a shout that woke the echoes in the hills.

Sam looked about, bewildered to hear his name called, and when he saw familiar faces looking down at him so unexpectedly, he stopped stock still, and his mouth fell open in amazement. The cow trotted on to rejoin the herd, and for a moment Sam rode beside the wagon.

"When did you leave home, Sam?" asked Mrs. Priestly.

"Yisteddy evenin', Miss Liddy," answered Sam. "De Major he done sont me to fetch dese yer cows to General Priestly. De Redcoats dey done tuck everything dey kin lay han's on, and de Major he come mighty close to appleplexxy when he found hit out. 'Sam,' he says, 'I done had you



bring dem beasts up from my farm down souf ob de ribber on a puppos and expressly so dey ain't gwine ter fill de stomicks ob none ob dem Redcoats, and heah dey is jes' a sha'penin' der knives fer to pounce on 'em! You git right out ob heah,'

he says, 'an drive 'em 'up de river, fin' de ahmy, and give 'em to General Priestly wid my compliments,' he says, 'an' ef you lets any cow git away, or lets the British git 'em, or don't fin' de ahmy, — any one, — I'll skin you when you gits back,' he says. I reckon de Major he mighty sot on dem cattle gittin' to de Ginerál." Sam grinned cheerfully as he recounted this fearful threat.

"But how did you get away with them?" asked Roger. "Didn't the Redcoats follow you? They followed us!"

"Dem cattle was pastured two miles away from home," answered Sam, "and I driv 'em out in de middle ob de night."

At this point another cow plunged off in the wrong direction, and Sam dashed after her, and came back alongside once more.

"Sam," said Mrs. Priestly, "we are trying to find the army too, with this load of hay. We will keep along with you."

"All right, Miss Liddy," said Sam. "I's mighty proud ob yo' company, ma'am, an'

de Major, he sho'ly will be peacified to know yo' is safe, an' on yo' way to jine de Ginerel. I aims to git back as soon as I kin git shet ob dese yer cows," and away Sam trotted, waving a friendly farewell as he again overtook his unruly charge.





X

AN UNHAPPY MEETING



## X

### AN UNHAPPY MEETING

ONE hour passed, and two, and still they had not been molested. Following closely in the wake of Sam and the herd, they covered mile after slow mile, their hearts growing a little lighter as each hour brought new evidence that they were nearing the camp of the Continental Army. The road was rough from the tramp of horses' feet, and scarred by the tracks of heavy teams. Once they passed a gun, mired in mud. Encouraged by these signs, they pressed on and on.

It was almost noon when at last they came to a forest of oak through which the road followed a winding course for a mile or more. A stream of clear, sparkling water came dashing down from the hills on the north to join the Schuylkill in the

valley below, making a wide and shallow pool where it crossed the road.

The sun as it neared the zenith had beaten down upon the little group on top of the hay-load, until, spent with heat and faint with hunger, Sally sank down on her mother's shoulder, looking so white that Mrs. Priestly called to Jude to stop the horses. The cattle, overjoyed at sight of fresh water after their long and dusty journey, waded knee-deep in the stream where it crossed the road to slake their thirst. The horses shook their heads, jerking at the check-reins, and Uncle Jude at once released them so they too might drink. Sailor was already up to his haunches in the water.

It was not possible at this point to keep close watch of the road, neither could they force the cattle forward until their thirst was quenched.

"We will get down and drink, too," said Mrs. Priestly. "It will revive Sally, I am sure, and do us all good to rest a bit in the shade."

Slowly and stiffly they climbed down from their high seat, and, leaving the road, went a short distance farther up stream to get a drink for themselves, while Uncle Jude drove on and stopped in midstream. They had no cup, so knelt down on the grassy bank, bathed their faces, and cooled their parched throats, using their hollowed palms to lift the water.

They were kneeling thus within sight of the road but at some distance from it, when again the thud of horses' hoofs over the way they had just traveled startled them. Springing to their feet, they saw through the trees four horsemen galloping toward the hay-wagon, and the cattle still lingering in the ford. They were appalled to see that one of the men wore the uniform of the British Army, and in the other three to recognize the spy and his two companions.

Mrs. Priestly instantly hid behind a clump of willows growing beside the stream, drawing the children with her,

while Aunt Hitty crouched with them behind the stump of a fallen tree.

When they caught sight of Uncle Jude and the hay-wagon, the men raised a yell of triumph, and, striking spurs into their horses' flanks, dashed forward to where it stood in the stream. Straight into the water they rode, surrounding the wagon in spite of old Sailor's indignant protests, and stampeding the cows so they ran bellowing up the road with Sam pounding after them.

"Get down off that seat, you black rascal," shouted the man with the bandaged leg. "You won't give us the slip again this time, for we're going to take your whole load, and you and the old woman into the bargain."

He seized Uncle Jude by the collar as he said this, and, dragging him from his seat, flung him with a mighty splash into the water. Then, throwing his bridle-rein to one of his confederates, he leaped to the driver's seat and, seizing the reins, tried to turn the heavy wagon about in midstream.

This was no easy task, for the road was narrow and the bed of the stream alternating rocks and mud. He first attempted to back and in doing so ran into a stone, which blocked the wheels, and wedged the wagon between it and a tree-trunk fallen in such a way that time and skill would both be needed in getting it out again.

Uncle Jude had picked himself up and was starting for the woods, when one of the other men splashed after him and headed him off. "Here, you old monkey-face," he shouted, "catch hold of their bridles and get the horses out."

Trembling so he could scarcely stand, Uncle Jude tried to obey. He seized Selim's bridle-rein and, pulling the horses forward, succeeded in freeing the wagon, but, in turning, the wheels on one side went down in the deep mud, leaving it in a worse position than before.

"You did that on purpose, you poisonous old villain," shouted the spy. He swung his whip in the air, and the lash

fell in a stinging blow on Uncle Jude's back. Poor Uncle Jude leaped up in the air with a cry of pain, so startling that the horses reared and plunged, lost their footing, and fell. In their struggle to regain their feet, the harness was broken, and the horses, springing forward, freed themselves and, jerking the spy from the driver's seat, deposited him sprawling in the stream.

Frightened still further by the broken harness slapping against them, the maddened creatures then ran, dragging the spy through the water like a giant and very gamey fish hooked to the end of a line!

It was a few seconds before he could loose himself from the entangling reins, and old Sailor, with great presence of mind, made the most of that instant. He flew at the spy, fastening his teeth in his breeches, and holding on with all his might and main until the garment gave way, leaving a large piece in the dog's possession. When he regained his footing, the man, beside himself with rage, reached for his pistol and





leveled it at the frantic dog, but his powder was wet and no report followed.

Uncle Jude by this time had nimbly disappeared into the woods, and there was no one on whom the spy could vent his rage. He stood wiping the water and mud from

his eyes and expressed his opinion of the dog, the wagon, the horses, the Colonial army, and the world in general in language which caused Mrs. Priestly, hidden in the thicket, to cover her ears with her hands.

To add to the man's rage and chagrin, his companions roared with laughter at his plight,—but only for an instant.

“Get back here on the load and hunt for the stuff yourself, you windbag,” shouted the soldier who appeared to be in command. “There's no time to lose! We can't get away with the wagon, and this road is patrolled.”

He threw his bridle-rein over one of the wagon-stakes as he spoke, and, leaping from his horse's back to the top of the load, he began a furious search, throwing armful after armful of hay into the stream to be carried away by the current.

“You go on up the road a piece,” he cried to one of the other men, “and watch for trouble. If you see the patrol coming, ride back for your life and give us warning;

and you," he added, turning to the third man, "round up that old nigger! He may have the coin on him."

The spy by this time had emptied his mind of several rounds of verbal ammunition, and, seizing the bridle-rein of his horse, was attempting to leap into his saddle.

"Where's the old woman?" he shouted. "Where's the old witch? More likely she's got it! There was just the two of 'em on the load! She diddled me once and she ain't going to do it again. I'll teach her a lesson! She was going to put a conjure on me, she was!"

"Maybe she has," shouted one of his companions. "I shouldn't say the luck was with you!"

Stung by the jeers of his companions, the dripping man made a furious lunge toward the saddle, but, weighted down with mud and water as he was, he failed to reach it. In this mischance old Sailor saw his opportunity and at once returned to the attack, nipping the man's heels and barking.

"Get out of here," shouted the spy, kicking backward. Annoyed by the dog, the horse now began whirling round and round in circles, and the spy with one foot in the stirrup, clung desperately to the bridle-rein and hopped after him. Round and round they went, until Sailor seized the hopping leg and refused to let go though urged to do so by the now helpless spy.

Aunt Hitty watched this strange dance with a satisfaction that outweighed her fears. "Sick 'im! Sailor, sick 'im!" she muttered under her breath, "an' don' yo' stop wid no clo's neither! Go for 'im! Eat 'im up! Bress de Lawd, he's done tuck a chunk right outen his laig!"

She rocked back and forth behind her stump, slapping her hands silently on her knees with delight, as the dog continued to harass the frantic spy, while Mrs. Priestly in anxious pantomime warned her to keep still.

At last the man succeeded in shaking off the dog, though he was obliged to part with

more of his clothing to free himself, and, once more in the saddle, he turned into the woods on the farther side of the road, promising terrible things at the top of his lungs if he should once lay his hands on the missing witch. This left the soldier alone on the load to hunt for the hidden treasure. Mrs. Priestly wrung her hands, and Roger shook his fists in helpless rage as armful after armful of hay was sent floating down stream, and every moment brought the precious store of provisions nearer to the surface.

The hay was nearly half gone, when a yell from the guard sent ahead to watch the road gave warning of the approach of the patrol. Instantly the two horsemen who were scouring the woods to find Aunt Hitty and Uncle Jude came dashing back again, and met their flying scout as he came splashing through the ford.

"They're coming! they're coming!" shouted the scout.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the thunder of horses' hoofs

in the distance raised the sinking hopes of the silent watchers in the willow copse. Roger, carried away by the excitement of the chase, sprang to his feet and was promptly jerked down by Aunt Hitty, while Sally, forgetting her weariness, leaned forward on her knees, clinging to her mother in breathless suspense.

In less time than it takes to tell it, the soldier had jumped from the hay to his mount, the spy and his companions had rejoined him, and the four men were holding a hurried council behind the hay-wagon. Unwilling to give up the precious booty they believed to be hidden either in the load or on the persons of Uncle Jude and Aunt Hitty, and enraged by having found nothing but rubbish in the bag of buckwheat, they stood with pistols ready to dispute possession of the wagon with the patrol.

Soon between the trunks of the forest trees a straggling line of horsemen could be seen galloping toward them, and when

they burst into view just beyond the ford, they were greeted by a shower of bullets from the pistols of the spy and his companions. Undaunted by this salute, the Colonial soldiers put spurs to their horses and dashed forward into the stream, firing an answering volley as they came.

The next instant the wagon was surrounded by American soldiers, for the spy and his companions, finding themselves hopelessly outnumbered, were racing back over the Philadelphia road, stooping over their horses' backs and clinging to their manes in order to avoid the storm of bullets sent flying after them.





XI  
JOURNEY'S END



## XI

### JOURNEY'S END

THE moment their enemies were out of sight the tired watchers in the woods came out of their hiding-place and dragged their stiffened limbs toward the group of Colonial soldiers now in possession of the wagon. Roger marched sturdily at the head of the little procession, followed by his mother and Sally, and after them came the valiant figure of Aunt Hitty. Uncle Jude joined them at the road, and all five went forward to greet their deliverers.

When he saw them, the young officer in charge of the patrol leaped from his saddle and came forward to meet them hat in hand.

"Have I the honor of speaking to Mrs. Priestly?" he asked.

"I am Mrs. Priestly," answered that lady, "but I do not understand how you can know it."

"A colored boy who said his name was Sam notified us of your situation," said the man. "He was trying to collect a herd of cows that he said had been scattered by some Britishers, and he rode on to get help."

"Humph!" remarked Aunt Hitty in an aside to Uncle Jude. "Dat ar Sam, he ain't nevah gwine to take no risks stayin' alongside ob trubble. He sho' puts his trus' in laigs."

"He hatter look after dem cows, lessen de Major skin him alive; and he sho' nuff brung de help," answered Uncle Jude pacifically.

"General Howe and his army are now encamped at Oak Hill," said Mrs. Priestly to the young officer. "They have burned our house. We escaped with this load of provisions, which we hope to get safely to General Priestly."

"Burned your house, did they?" said the young officer, flushing with anger. "Dear Madam, you must be very tired, and your daughter seems quite exhausted."



"We have had nothing to eat," said Mrs. Priestly, and her voice trembled a little. "There is food in the wagon, but we were pursued by spies and dared not stop to get it out or make a fire to cook it."

"Here," shouted the young officer to his men. "Two of you get out on the road to watch for Redcoats, and you, Peters, get out your kit and prepare a little food for these people."

The man called Peters sprang forward to obey, but Mrs. Priestly stopped him with a gesture. "No, no," she said. "I have a message for General Priestly and must get it to him at once. Can you not direct us to the encampment? We know only that it is on the river and that it cannot be very far from here."

"But your children," demurred the young man, glancing at Sally's white face.

"We want what Mother wants," said Roger, loyally, "to get to General Priestly without waiting for anything." And Sally nodded her head without speaking.

The young officer saluted. "As you will, Madam," he said. "I will leave men here with your servants to repair the wagon and bring it in, and you can ride their horses to camp. I will go with you."

"Our own horses went over that way," said Roger, pointing to a trail that ran along beside the stream. "Perhaps we might find them."

"Peters," said the young officer, "see if you can trace them." Without more words he swung the two children to the back of a horse brought forward by one of his men, and, taking another for Mrs. Priestly, he bent his knee for her to step on in mounting.

Almost too weary to reach the saddle, and burdened with the weight of gold, Mrs. Priestly swayed and might have fallen had not Aunt Hitty steadied her gently in the awkward saddle.

"Dere you is, Miss Liddy, honey," she said soothingly, "an' I prossifies dat hit ain't gwine to be long before de Gincral

hisselt lifts you down from dis yere saddle, safe an soun'. Jude 'n' me, us'll stay by de wagon."

Mrs. Priestly smiled down at her. "Keep the dog with you," she said, "and be sure and get out something to eat for yourselves and follow us as soon as you can."

With these words she turned her horse's head westward, and, led by the young officer, the little cavalcade moved off up the valley of the Schuylkill.

Sally glanced back over her shoulder as they rode away, and saw Aunt Hitty holding old Sailor by the collar to keep him from following them, and Uncle Jude already hunting wood for a fire to dry his clothes and cook something from the provisions in the cart. It was but a glimpse. The trees soon hid the picture from her sight, and she turned her eyes once more to the path before them.

Another hour of steady riding, and as they rounded a bend in the road Roger



gave a cry of joy. "There's the camp!" he shouted.

At this welcome news Sally lifted her tired head to peer over Roger's shoulder, and Mrs. Priestly gazed at the distant tents as though upon the promised land. Soon they were passing between rows of shabby tents where, beside camp-fires, haggard and unshaven men were cooking their meager rations; and, following their guide, they at last came to a stop before a farm-house.

"This is General Washington's headquarters, Madam," said the young officer. "I must stop here to find out where General Priestly is. He may have been sent away on some special duty."

He dismounted and approached the sentry standing before the door. The guard saluted, and the salute was returned.

"General Washington is just about to sit down to dinner," said the guard. "My orders are to see that no one disturbs him for half an hour."

Mrs. Priestly and the children leaned

eagerly forward in their saddles but were too far away to catch the words which they hoped might direct them to their journey's end. They could only guess from what they saw that after a short argument the young officer brushed by the guard and entered the house.

In breathless suspense the three tired watchers at the gate gazed at the closed door and waited for his return. One minute — two — passed, then the door was flung wide and in the opening they saw the astonished face of General Priestly himself! In three strides he was at the gate and lifting his wife from the horse, while Roger and Sally, their weariness forgotten for the moment, leaped to the ground to join their mother in his arms.

"Lydia," cried her husband, when the first joyous greetings were over, "why are you here? Has anything happened? Surely you have not been riding alone in this way."

"Yes," said Mrs. Priestly. "We have

much to tell you, but first let us give you the money. It is like mill-stones about our necks."

"About your necks!" exclaimed her husband in amazement, glancing at his wife's throat. "Surely you have not risked traveling over these roads with the gold on your own person!"

"Not alone, John," she said, drawing Sally and Roger closer. "I have two brave and loyal children with me, beside Aunt Hitty and Uncle Jude."

In his astonishment the General opened his lips to ask still another question, but, instead, seeing how spent she was, led her gently forward to the house without another word, motioning the children to follow. The young officer, who had rejoined them, saluted and rode away as the little party passed the sentinel and entered the headquarters of the American Army.

Keeping close behind their father and mother, Roger and Sally found themselves in a small entrance disclosing a large bare

room beyond in which a group of officers were just seating themselves about a table. When General Priestly entered with his wife on his arm, the men all arose, and a noble-looking gentleman in a well-worn uniform immediately left the table, and, stepping forward, stood waiting with courtly deference to receive them. Though they had never seen him before, the children looking up into the benign face did not need to be told that they were standing in the presence of the head of the American Army and his staff officers.

"General Washington, this is my wife, and these are my children," said General Priestly, and, as the Commander-in-Chief bent over the lady's hand in courtly acknowledgment of the presentation, he added proudly, "they have brought the gold to pay the troops."

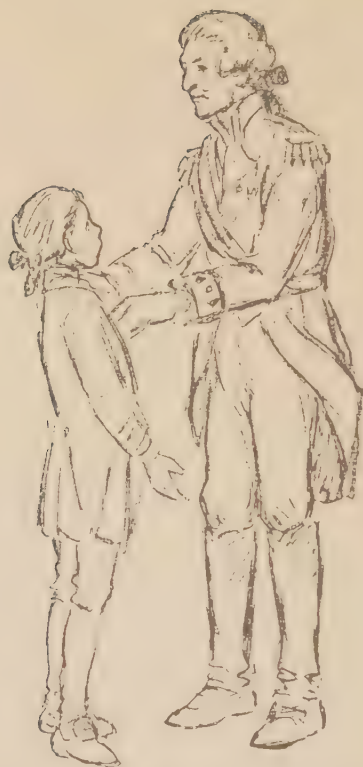
A murmur of surprise and gratitude rose from the group about the table, and General Washington's care-worn face relaxed in an expression of relief, which immedi-

ately changed to a look of concern as he glanced keenly at the weary faces before him.

"Madam, you have performed a distinguished and dangerous service for your country, and I can see it has been at great cost to yourself," he said. "Let us relieve you of your burden and offer you such refreshment as we have at our command."

The officers of his staff gathered about their chief at once, every eye fixed upon the little group before them and every thought intent upon the eagerly awaited bag of gold upon which so much depended. At a gesture from General Washington one of his aides stepped forward to receive the treasure, and there was a moment of embarrassed silence as no bag of gold appeared.

Mrs. Priestly glanced appealingly at her husband, and Sally and Roger looked in bewilderment to her for direction in this unforeseen turn of events. General Priestly was still too much in the dark himself to



offer any solution of their mysterious behavior.

It was Roger who met the dilemma. Going directly to General Washington and smiling confidently up into the kind face, he smote his breast and said simply, "*Feel.*"

The General felt, and a look of pleased

surprise swept over his face. "You have it concealed on your person!" he exclaimed, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder and smiling down at him.

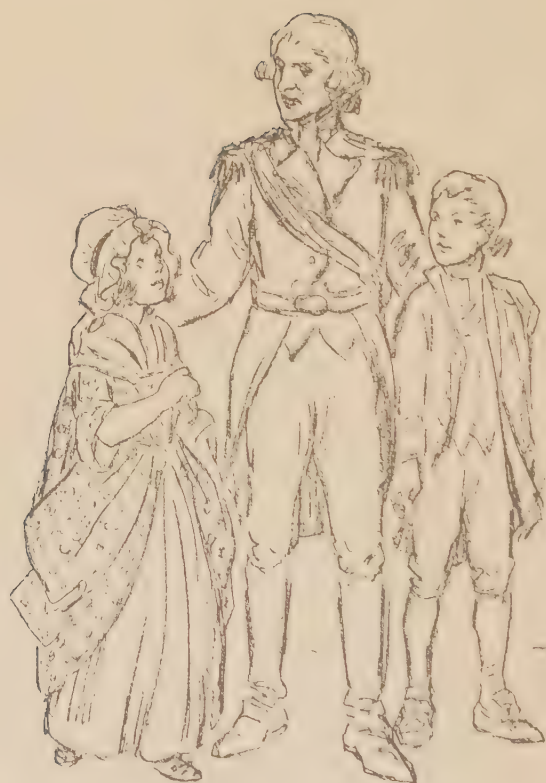
"Not all of it," said Roger. "The rest of it is on Mother and Sally."

A burst of delighted applause from the staff officers greeted the boy's naïve statement, and in his father's face pride mingled with anxiety as he looked from his son to the drooping figure of his wife and felt Sally lean against him for support.

"They have had no food," he exclaimed. "They are exhausted with hunger and exposure! I do not yet know the story of the past three days except as it is written in their faces, — but —"

General Washington stayed him with a wave of his hand. "Not a word, not a question," he said, "until they are relieved of their burdens and have had food and rest. Our dinner will wait upon their convenience."

He drew Roger and Sally to him with a tender, fatherly gesture, and with an arm





about each, led the way to the door of his own room. General Priestly followed with his wife.

"Take them in here," said the Commander-in-Chief, opening the door, "and when they are sufficiently refreshed, we shall be honored to place before them the best the house affords. I wish for their sakes it were better fare."

Mrs. Priestly paused at the entrance long enough to say, "We thank you, sir, for this consideration," and to sweep him a curtsey before the door closed upon the reunited family.

For a short time the door remained closed, and when at last it opened again, General Priestly stepped forth alone into the waiting group of his brother officers, carrying in his hand the long strips of linen, heavy with their weight of gold. Eager as they were to receive it, his comrades in arms were struck with the grief and anger written upon his face as he placed the money before General Washington.

In the brief time he had spent with his family alone in the room Roger had given his father a short account of the events of the three days which had elapsed since they last saw him, and while certain ones of the group were intrusted with the task of counting the money, General Priestly recounted to General Washington and the others the story of the spy's effort to rob the house, the attempted bribery by General Howe, the escape of his family, the burning of their home, and the dangers his wife and children had braved to carry out the trust imposed upon them.

General Washington listened with bowed head to the recital, and tears gleamed in more than one pair of eyes as the brave tale was told. For a short time no one spoke, but each heart leaped with renewed courage at the recital and every man in his own mind dedicated himself anew to the cause of American independence.

When the door again opened, and the brave woman and her two brave children

reappeared, every man present rose to his feet and stood, as General Washington went forward to meet them and to escort Mrs. Priestly to a place of honor at his right hand. The children were seated one on each side of their father, and the interrupted meal went forward.

It was a meager banquet at best, but to the famished children it seemed a feast for the gods; and when at its conclusion General Washington himself proposed the health of his guests and expressed to them the thanks of a grateful country, and the toast was drunk standing to do it more honor, the pains and perils of their dangerous journey were forgotten in the joy of well-earned praise.

The afternoon was nearly spent when at last the company rose from the table and General Priestly was confronted with the immediate problem of providing shelter for the night for his homeless family. He drew his wife and children aside and had begun a whispered conference with them, when a

hand was laid upon his shoulder, and, turning, he saw General Washington standing beside him.

"To-night," said the kind voice, "your family shall be quartered by my orders in a house in the neighborhood; and to-morrow you are at liberty to take a furlough until you have settled your wife and children in another home. I have a house on the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg which you are welcome to use as long as you need it, at least until this war is over and the country is established in peace and independence. My mother lives in Fredericksburg, and she will befriend your wife when duty demands your return."

Overcome with emotion, General Priestly undertook to reply, but his superior officer silenced him with a wave of his hand. "No thanks," he said; "the country is still in your debt, Madam, and will ever be. The money that you and your children have so faithfully guarded and preserved for us comes at a moment when the suc-

cess of our cause seems to hang in the balance. It may well be that it is the one thing needed to tip the scale in our favor."

He bowed low to Mrs. Priestly, laid his hand affectionately on her husband's shoulder, kissed Sally and Roger on the forehead, and was gone.

A young orderly was dispatched to arrange for their reception at a farm-house a little distance up the road, and horses were provided to convey them to their new quarters. They were just setting forth from headquarters, when Roger gave a shout, and, pointing back over the road, cried out: "There they come! There's old Sailor, and Selim, and Aunt Hitty and Uncle Jude! Oh, glory! They're all here!"

They stopped their horses, and, sitting in their saddles, waited for the wagon to make its impressive progress up the village street to join them. Preceded by a guard of four mounted soldiers, with the two men who had given up their horses to Mrs. Priestly and the children clinging on behind

like footmen, the wagon came creaking along the road, bearing Aunt Hitty enthroned in regal state on top of the load. Her broad face beamed with delight as she recognized her beloved mistress; and when the cavalcade drew near, she leaned from her high seat and shouted:

"What I done tol' yo', Miss Liddy, honey? De ahm ob de Lawd hit ain't nowise sho'tened! Heah is de Ginerol hisself, and heah yo' is and heah we is, and heah is all dem vittles safe and sound, scusin' a side ob bacon I cooked fer Jude and me and dese yer genl'men." She waved her hand toward her guard, and the "genl'men" acknowledged their participation with satisfied grins.

"Yassum, Miss Liddy, honey," she went on as the family joined the procession, "an' I reckon termorrer am sholy comin' along too, jes like I said it would."

Mrs. Priestly smiled bravely back at her. "Yes, Hitty," she said, "to-morrow will surely come."









